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# ESSAY ON THE BASES

OF THE

# MYSTIC KNOWLEDGE

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# ESSAY ON THE BASES

OF THE

# MYSTIC KNOWLEDGE

Ἡ Βασιλεια τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν.

(Luke xvii. 21)

BY

E. RÉCÉJAC

DOCTOR OF LETTERS

Translated

BY

SARA CARR UPTON

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

THE translator would say that the citations in this work have been carefully compared with the English originals or translations, but in quoting the titles, that it has seemed on the whole fairer to give the titles and pages of the works as quoted by the author, instead of changing them to the English titles or titles of other translations which he did not use.

S. C. U.

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# INTRODUCTION

Must we believe that Mysticism is like "some vast ocean, the empire of illusion"[1] where adventurous thinkers go astray, or is it a state of direct intuition which may be claimed by right, as divinely imparted?

The question presents itself to us with this alternative: either Mysticism contains a negation of thought worse than Scepticism, or it is the most perfect activity of the mind. If it be that Mysticism is only obstinate persistence to know the unknowable, we shall have to accept the first conclusion. The pursuit of the impossible perverts our faculties and makes them unfit for their natural use. But, should Mysticism prove to be an experience distinct from what we understand by the word "knowing," it would be worth our while to inquire if something new is introduced into the consciousness, and in what ways.

Reason is in possession of too much light to be able to remain quite at ease in the region of clear ideas, but not enough to know first principles of actual knowledge. In this penumbra who can trace the exact limit of perceptions and say where the true disappears in the probable, where the probable vanishes in illusion?

[1] Kant, *Critique de la raison pure*, Barni, i. p. 304.

Many systems, under many names have been proposed whereby to deliver Reason from this sense of relativity more irksome than radical incapacity. It cannot be said that any have a higher value than that of more or less ingenious views. The work of knowing — the effort to synthesize the world and the ego — is forever recommencing.

Mysticism has often aggravated this natural disability, and has been justly blamed for it. Throughout the centuries, intellectual despair and moral impatience have provoked doctrines and practice which have been to the last degree wild and improbable.

The Absolute will not be found in any of the inspirations of despair and impatience. Unless we search for it in some region of our consciousness where autonomy (that reflection of God) is clearly manifested, and unless we search with the effort which desires "the better" as well as "the new," we shall only open the way to divagations and extravagant fancies. There is no other way for man to rise above himself than by Freedom. On this side alone there are no impassable limitations, and on this side alone can infinite progress be opposed to relative experience. Thought must not look on itself as a distinct and separate activity, but it must hold close to Freedom and trust in Freedom, the sole creative power that is ours: not otherwise may we apprehend the Infinite.

In our modern consciousness there is an intense feeling for Freedom, as though it were something of our invention. Shall we see the idea of the past, the mystic idea, give place to the forceful energies which this sense of Freedom has brought into all orders of things, — science, industry, etc.?

The Christian idea, it is said, had relegated the Ideal to a life beyond, but the world, aroused from these unverified dreams, has set its hopes in itself, here in this actual existence, where Freedom shall find its kingdom, which is the true heaven. Had the Christian idea contained nothing but the mystical power of Hope, perhaps even then it would have lived. But Freedom bears in itself a mysticism which nothing can take away, and this is disinterestedness. We shall find nothing real at the bottom of Freedom except disinterestedness, but possessing that, it is boundless, homogeneous in essence with the Absolute.

What is the psychology of this act of "moral alienation" of the self, this voluntary abdication of the me? Can the act be freed of all mysticism and dispense with the Absolute? The empirical school is working to construct a Logic of the "heart," under the name of Altruism. In our opinion no such Logic is possible, and when science reaches the point of explaining all things mechanically (if it ever does) the "heart" will still be an *implicit* without formula, — a fact beyond laws. There is in us an "immanent" act or energy, as contrasted with continuous energy, of which none but contradictory notions can be given — it is a fact which we cannot know scientifically and which must be left to the mystics on condition that they make good use of it. We return to Pascal's idea, "Love excels understanding." First principles which elude Dialectics appear to the "Heart" under the form of symbols.

Mysticism lives by symbols, the only mental representation by which the Absolute can enter into our relative

experience. It is said that those symbols which are the most logically and morally perfect are the ones to survive. But will any survive? Are there such things as universal and necessary symbols? We stand apart from all these questions, and indeed shall have occasion to show that they are not to be asked. It is our opinion, however, that enough mystic genius has been deposited in our constitution, not in the nature of a residuum from slow ages of tradition, but as a fundamental, inherent possession, to withstand all influences of non-assimilation, and that this atavism forms part of Reason.

Would it be the part of good philosophy to take no account of these elements in the study of man?

The only scope of our undertaking is to make a purely rational critique of "mystic knowledge," or it might be better to say "mystic experience." From among a host of manifestations of this instinct, beginning with the Alexandrian ecstasy down to the last novelties of occultism, we have had to select that form least likely to vanish at the first touch of pure Reason.[1] The Christian mystics themselves cannot clearly serve us as types. Few of them combine the yearnings of celestial love with the real qualities of genius. Aside from the canonical books (the marrow and substance of

[1] Were we to embrace in our work all the intellectual excesses done in the name of Mysticism we should be led into confusion from lack of homogeneity in the subject. We shall press on straight to the *mystic Fact*, leaving to one side all less direct speculations tending to introduce the Unknowable into the consciousness in dialectical form. The mystic fact is a *naïve* and non-methodical attempt to apprehend the Absolute; it is a *symbolic* and not a dialectic mode of thought. The course of this work will lead us to make the distinction still plainer.

Christianity), and a few Fathers of the Church, very little remains to furnish us a basis of original and critical observation. When it has been necessary to refer to Christian opinion, we have followed by preference Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

It is understood, therefore, that we are not concerned with Christian mysticism specially, but with universal mysticism, or in other words, with all transcendental methods which tend to actualize the desires of Freedom in experience.

This transcendence depends first of all upon Freedom itself. All mysticism must seek in Freedom its determining principles and its inspiration.

Afterwards it rises by means of mental "*symbolic*" representations. We can have no other experience of the Absolute in this life than through symbolic representations.

Before treating of the two questions, "Symbols" and the "Heart," we shall endeavor, as preliminary, to compare Mysticism with the other methods of knowing, and to determine its place in Philosophy.

# FIRST PART

## THE ABSOLUTE

The understanding does not include all the facts of consciousness in the field of its discursive work. And yet the aim of modern philosophy has not been to widen our comprehension of all that lies in the consciousness, but rather to eliminate from it as "Unknowable" whatever has not yet emerged into the state of concepts. Can this be done?

Mysticism, on the other hand, claims to be able to know the Unknowable without help from dialectics, and is persuaded that, by means of love and will, it reaches a point to which thought, unaided, cannot attain. What is there in common between this state of consciousness called "mystic" and definite consciousness or knowledge?

# CHAPTER FIRST

## CONCERNING THE VARIOUS ATTITUDES OF MIND TOWARD THE ABSOLUTE

### § I. — EMPIRICISM, DETERMINISM

I. In vain do we oppose the "Simple" to the "Absolute." At the basis of existence and of knowledge there is an Implicit.

II. Necessity in the sense of Determinism leads to the pure One — to Non-Being : it is only conceivable in the Absolute as Good and Act pure.

III. There is no law in the true sense except the moral law.

I. According to the opinion of the empiricist-determinist, an object of cognition should be separated into parts by analysis until we reach the simple : they maintain that instead of trying vainly to find the synthesis of first principles in the Absolute, we should begin at the lowest point, and never weary of dividing and sub-dividing in order to understand. This method cannot be accepted, not merely because we have not the physical means to reach the ultimate elements, but because the method contradicts Logic itself. The mind separates things into parts to get at their inner relations, and not for the purpose of grasping the principle in each by itself. If several terms were not presented to the mind there would be no object and no act, and all judgment and all intuition would be at an end.

In vain do we oppose the "Simple" to the "Absolute." At the basis of existence and of knowledge there is an Implicit.

Saint Augustine has well defined this character of Reason: "By an inner and invisible act, I can separate and put together terms proposed to the faculty of knowing, and this faculty I call my Reason. Now, what have we to separate if it is not *that which we believed to be one, and which is not, or at least not so much one as we believed?* And what does it mean to put things together unless it is to make them one so far as may be? Therefore, whether I perform the act which separates or the act which brings together, it is Unity which I love always. The difference is that when I analyze and separate I am seeking for pure One, and when I put together I am desiring to find the complete whole. By the first process I eliminate the elements that are foreign, and by the second I bring together those that are common, in order to obtain perfect Unity."[1]

The author shows clearly enough by these last words that to his mind there is no *simple One,* and that "perfect unity" can only be conceived as an *Implicit.* At the basis of the rational consciousness, then, there is an implicit, an inexplicable, an *a priori.*

If we go to Mathematics, we find that the mind has to base its logic on an original intuition. When we construct number, form, and their laws, we are doing much more than "recognize the same in the other." The science of Mechanics is seen to be still in progress towards the concrete, and in Dynamics the ideality is less pure than in Mathematics. Force, in whatever sense we are inclined to

[1] *De Ordine,* l. xi., ch. xviii. *Oper.*, t. i., p. 211, Paris, 1586.

understand it, is a suspicious notion in the sight of Determinism.[1] But where then shall we stop? What ontological principle in its simplicity shall we oppose to the Absolute, whether it be the abstract Absolute of Rationalism or the living Absolute of the Mystics?

II. The one idea, perhaps, dearer than all others to Determinists is the idea of "Law." But what do they claim by it? Would they have us exclude all spontaneity from Being? — confront Nature and Being as two contradictory terms?

Necessity in the sense of Determinism leads to the pure One — to Non-Being: it is only conceivable in the Absolute as Good and Act pure.

When Determinism reaches this essential concept of "Law" it cannot be allowed to go any further, for it has begun to confuse two things which it desires absolutely to distinguish, — necessity and contingency.

The universal and the necessary are two different categories, the first of which returns to the principle of identity, but the second does not by any means. The "possible" answers to the universal, but being does not do this, nor, (even with greater reason) does necessity. This is an important point. If we let the idea of the Absolute escape us with regard to Necessity, we shall no longer be able to grasp it again in Freedom.

The "same," that is, simple One, does not exist, and unless we quickly resort to Saint Augustine's "perfect Unity" the principle of identity, while it would remain true, would be

[1] The action which we suppose to take place in molecules, is a "psychic hypothesis introduced into physics." — Fouillée, *Les abus de l'Inconnaissable en morale.* Rev. phil. Mar. 1895, p. 460.

without practical application. But how is it that we may oppose, under guarantee of identity, not the same to the same, but the same to the other? How are we to present the Implicit to Reason? Which is equivalent to saying, "How does being follow from the possible?" From this first step, in the very act of Reason which puts the consciousness in possession of the "substantive" (the organic bond of thought) the Absolute is presupposed. There is nothing in the Possible itself whereby it becomes Being: that which lies between these two logical terms is no longer in logical order: it is something quite other than an abstraction: it is a nucleus which we can only grasp in the reality of our life and our consciousness. The point at which all analysis, scientific or logical, ends is the Implicit, and cannot have *is* for copula: identity is but the criterion of the abstract, the unproductive principle of the pure possible. The truly substantive copula which gives passage from the possible to being and from the abstract to the real is the word *fiat*, something very remote from the lifeless and uniform character of the categories, and the word by which each one of us expresses the most subjective part of himself, — motion, life, desire.[1] But have we not already an Absolute in "fiat"? There is nothing to be met which is more mystical than this.

[1] The idea of force has alternated from the mechanical to the psychological sense. To speak only of the modern world, Galileo strengthened the mechanical interpretation when he identified motion and rest in a single fact, inertia. Descartes in his mathematical Determinism had reduced the idea of Force to a minimum, but since the time when Newton corrected this Determinism by the double proof that real motion is curvilinear and varied, not rectilinear and uniform, the idea of Force has resumed its importance, with the psychological signification which alone renders it conceivable. Determinism has finally fixed

It matters little whether the "fiat" reason of Being has for some of us the subjective aspect of Desire, and for others the objective aspect of Force: it must ever be the principle of motion and of the diverse opposed to the identity and immobility of Being, whether it remains adherent to consciousness or whether it is separated therefrom.

The Absolute, we have to admit, is only abstract being, complicated with an element too subjective to be defined apart, but which at the same time is neither metaphysical like being, nor experiential in the already objective sense of the word "Force." The Absolute is not manifested in a definition. It needs an introspective description which does not detach it from the consciousness in some form cut out of the consciousness and less than the whole. Words are only a feeble attempt. Our first impression of the Absolute is perhaps in that sense of material resistance which comes to each of us with the dawn of Reason: this impression grows with our growth and at last culminates in a feeling of ideal resistance which we call "duty," but which we have the truly remarkable power of changing into Freedom and Autonomy.

But, however it may be, the Absolute alone, and not Being, dominates the mind and the world, and accounts, at the same time, for things and for us who think them.

Necessity, therefore, is not purely physical nor purely metaphysical. It resides in an Absolute which contains all

on this definition: "Force is the product of the mass by the velocity," but this definition, only expressing a relation, though it may be wise to accept it for practical purposes, cannot satisfy thought in all other cases.

Nature and Freedom, and whose double character of active and implicit we have rendered by the word "fiat." This Absolute is in us and in all things: it is spirit and life so far as we can become conscious of it in ourselves: it is God in that its effects infinitely exceed us, immersed as we are in universal motion and desire.

III. Empiricism, which takes especial pride in being exact, concedes that "laws are only approximations." Yet even in this judgment there is a contradiction. To say "law" is to say "invariable determination" and consequently, "necessity," but to say "approximation" is to say the opposite. Thus we see that the concept must perish or pass into the *moral* notion of law.

There is no law in the true sense except the moral law.

When we scan the most scientific conclusions of Determinism, we find that empiricists have no better type of law than the law of universal attraction. But there is no necessity in that law. In addition to the fact that it is only approximate, we may at least think that the attraction might take place, for example, inversely to the known law, in proportion to the simple distance, instead of the square of the distance. Science would only have to change all its formulæ, which would be no disadvantage. Reason therefore appears to us, itself and alone, outside of any experience, as necessity. But, as we have no consciousness of Reason (this much we must concede to the Empiricists) except when it appears to us as applied to some kind of matter, it must be moral matter alone, in default of experience, that gives rise to "laws." Three centuries ago the word itself was not current in the language of scholars, and the purity of its ancient acceptation should have

been preserved. Properly speaking, there are no laws but "moral laws."

Mysticism must take its place in Philosophy as soon as the explanations of determinism are no longer found sufficient. At that moment the Absolute becomes present in the rational consciousness, and it must be acknowledged that it is present under the form of Implicit equally with the notion of Being, Force, and Motion. A second stage in Mysticism is finality, and thither the world of morals brings us.

The Absolute, however, so far, has only presented itself rationally to the consciousness, and still belongs to the domain of dialectics. But when there comes the question of ascribing to the idea of God its inner matter, dialectics do not suffice. We shall go on to show that for this purpose the whole consciousness must be subsumed into a unique intuition or representation. Science, Pleasure, Duty do not meet in any common experience. This is reserved for the mystic experience.

## § II. — POSITIVISM

I. Reason could not have come out of the Unconscious by evolution: it transcends the "subject" whence it would be said to come.

II. "To objectivate" is to have already thought the Absolute.

III. Spencer's opinion: conclusion that Mysticism underlies all knowledge.

I. The evolutionary idea has been a productive one for the scientific imagination, but the theory has its dangers outside the field of the natural sciences. In psychology, it is, to say the least, difficult of application. If we take away the opposition of Being and Becoming (which is at the bottom of the evolutionary thesis) do we not destroy the basis of identity on which we must find support, and means to organize the extremely unstable elements of our consciousness?

Reason could not have come out of the Unconscious by evolution: it transcends the "subject" whence it would be said to come.

We are told that the first men, seeing their shadow, or seeing their own image in a dream, conceived the idea of an apparitional soul or ghost soul. Whatever the historic data on this subject may be, it is evident that the act of Reason which we are aware of in ourselves by experience as much as we are of "sight" and "touch," is not reducible by any number of intermediary terms to such acts of duplication. Reason, instead of being a fact of pure subjectivity, tends to set up things in themselves and to objectivate phenomena: and possibly it is the fundamental condition of our psychology that we are not, like animals, bound up in our own

sensations and in perceptions of ourselves. From the moment that man is no longer content to devise things useful for his existence under the exclusive action of the "will-to-live," the principle of Evolution has been violated. Between this state, which is wholly subjective, and that in which a man finds interest for the first time in a straight line, there is a greater distance, logically, than there is between inertia and life, than between Reason and what the Mystics call "Inspiration." The first step taken by the mind to surmount the subjectivity of its representatives is the first step towards the Absolute.

Nothing in the world can oppose itself to this *à priori* by which the mind posits itself distinctly and in advance of all its perceptions. Because it can thus posit itself as a sort of Absolute, Reason is a higher condition than life. Life carries with it none of the marks of the necessary: its identity is only a "fact." In itself it has nothing to oppose logically to the attempts of those who would bring it under mechanical laws. Reason, on the contrary, is posited as a necessary identity, with power to defy Determinism, because it endows Determinism with inevitability and idea of *Law*, which the latter too often abuses.

It is of no importance just here whether Reason was posited at the same moment with Being or whether it appeared in Time. Distinct, as we have just seen, from the moment it appeared, something as great and as original as Being began. There is more Mysticism in this affirmation than in the idea of Creation, which has been discarded only through fear of Mysticism. If any one believes that

Reason is immanent in things, he has no right to interpret such immanence in a manner contradictory to the transcendence thus involved. There is therefore a dominating fact in our consciousness, which it is impossible for us to reject as the logical sequence of all the others, whether they form our "inner" or "outer" selves.

II. It may be also that the positivist theory of the identity of the mystic fact and the spiritual has been too generally accepted. The Absolute is not first present in the consciousness as an ulterior act, or act of reflection, but it is there from the first instant of mental life. Taking this position, we are not concerned further with the essence of the mental fact: whether it consists in objectifying facts of consciousness or in subjectifying phenomena, it contains always some strange instinct of the Absolute.

"To objectivate" is to have already thought the Absolute.

Are we justified in interpreting our very slender prehistoric discoveries in the sense of an animistic belief? Was it not truly *Being* or *One* that man first sought in things, and not the *Double* of himself?[1] We are told that "just

[1] An experience related by some missionaries tends to show that this preoccupation with the essence of things is at least quite as constitutive of Reason as is the animist prepossession. "The Cochinchinese think that the spirits of the dead take their place at table and eat. The missionaries tried to reason against this prejudice. The Cochinchinese answered: 'There are two things in the food: one part contains the essence and the other, the quantity, quality, perfume, taste, and a host of other things. The immaterial souls of the dead consume the essence, and find in it the immaterial element which suits the incorporeal soul: so that what appears to the corporeal senses only, is left in the dishes, and for this purpose souls have no need of corporeal instruments.'" (Borri, *Relatione della nova missione della comp. di Gesù.* Rome, 1631, p. 208.)

as soon as man got beyond mere sensation, he began to believe in the supernatural, but as that was merely a rudiment of the intellectual life, the further he gets from such a state of consciousness the more truly he *thinks*." Can it be really that progress has brought us to a psychological phase inverse to that which Auguste Comte called "theological"? May not the mode of reflection, which he designated by that name, instead of being the beginning of our mental evolution, be the most naïve and ever-present form of thought?

If the intellectual act begins by the impression made upon us by things, it is evident that the act is not completed until an inverse motion has replaced the things detached from the ego, in their proper sphere. "Thought," says Kant, "is the act of referring a given intuition to an object." [1]

Positivists go so far as to recount, with more or less historic accuracy, how primitive peoples, as they advanced in generalization by processes of cognizing which still remained "theological," substituted in their minds the fetish "forest" for the fetish "tree," and gradually creating divinities of wider range as their powers of ideation grew, at last reached the point which touches metaphysical thought, namely, "monotheism." Even if we leave out of the question the seemingly mystical character of knowing, it must, we think, be held that this logical recurrence towards the Absolute is a universal fact, indicative of our

[1] *Critique de la raison pure*, t. i. p. 313.

intellectual constitution.[1] Hamilton himself arrives at the formal conclusion in favor of a mystic need. "When we become aware of our incapacity to conceive anything beyond the relative and finite, a marvellous revelation inspires us with belief in the existence of something unconditioned which is beyond the sphere of all comprehensible reality."[2] He might at least have attempted to describe this "marvellous revelation," instead of being satisfied to make such a simple statement of it. It is true that the "relative" and the "finite" have not the same limits to-day as they had in prehistoric times, but although their boundary lines are wider, nothing has been taken from the territory of the infinite and the unconditioned. This being the case, how are we to preclude mysticism? The minds of primitive men fixed the Absolute in a stone, a tree, an animal: others raised their thought to a god-species, and we could no doubt establish the stages of mental progress by such marks of the progressive extension of mystic concepts. But the great thing to establish is that man has been in search of the Absolute at every moment of his intellectual life.[3]

[1] "Thus," says Berkeley, "when the greatest men deal in abstractions, they are compelled to make use of words which have no certain significance." We might add that this passage proves that when the civilized metaphysician speaks in such terms, he goes back to the primitive conceptions which still occupy the gross minds of the natives of Siberia or Guinea. (Tylor, Primitive Culture, p. 209.)

[2] Philos. of the Unconditioned, cited in Spencer's "First Principles," p. 66.

[3] "Each advance made in the physical sciences seems marked by the abandonment of some of these mythological terms, but new ones spring up at once. By the term 'molecular vibrations' we suppose the ether. Ether is a myth." (Max Müller, New Lessons in the Science of Language, t. ii. pp. 344, 345.)

III. Spencer does not disagree with these conclusions. "From the very beginning man has been seeking for the supernatural cause. . . . The final result of this speculation, begun by primitive man, is that the power manifested in the material universe is the same power which appears in us as consciousness. By means of future evolution of the intelligence, the course of things, now comprehensible only in parts may be comprehended in its totality . . . but the absolute certainty remains to man that he will always find himself in presence of an infinite and eternal energy, source of all things."[1] We may ask ourselves what ground mysticism (we do not say fanaticism) will have lost in that epoch of "future evolution" when we shall be compelled, just as we are to-day, to conceive "that eternal and infinite energy" source of all things. Will it seem to us any less *marvellous* as we gradually come to objectify it more and more and detach it from the self (if this is the sense of the word "scientific")? We should be inclined to believe the contrary. It is our opinion that mysticism, pure of all alloy, will expand as much as science and with it.

Spencer's opinion: conclusion that Mysticism underlies all knowledge.

Positivism contains the contradiction of preserving the "Unknowable" while excluding it from the consciousness: of considering it as a "question" while taking away all the terms in which the question could be presented to thought. Mysticism must adapt itself to agnostic demonstration, but it refuses to maintain an attitude of religious respect to the Unknowable merely as Unknowable: it seeks

[1] Rev. phil., January, 1884, pp. 1–14.

to obtain consciousness of the Absolute by means of symbols, and this experience, for the mystic soul, is the source of reverence and all the other religious sentiments.

Under the name of the "Unknowable" or under the name of the "Absolute," God will always be present to Reason as a Light, or if you choose, as some unconquerable illusion inciting it to motion and action. Perhaps it is true that metaphysical inquiry moves in a circle forever returning to itself, . . . but what does it matter, provided the mind and the heart find it a means of life?

Is not Love itself, like Thought, perpetually urged by Illusion to recommence, without ceasing, works which do not endure, and yet which manifest the permanency of Being, the power of Life? Whether the Absolute is knowable or unknowable, it is the Absolute which thought longs for at the bottom of all intelligible things, and what but the Absolute holds our Reason in a state of Desire leading on to energy and act?

## § III. — CRITICISM

I. The Kantian definition of Being. What Kant dreaded was Fanaticism, not Mysticism.

II. The Kantian *à priori* (the mind) calls for another *à priori* (the *Noumenon* or "Absolute"), into which Mysticism alone dares to penetrate.

III. The work of Criticism is to correct Reason without checking the other initiatives of the soul. The postulates of Criticism give no intellectual standpoint unless some mystic certainty is added.

I. It is not for us to inquire what Kant may have thought about the Absolute. He took the greatest care

not to have it known. Nevertheless, it is well to acquaint ourselves with the way in which Kant treated the notion of Being, the ontological notion nearest to the Absolute.

In Kant's opinion it is not time and space that distinguish relative existence from uncreated existence: or rather, he discards this distinction, and collects all Being into the single noumenon, in the way that Spinoza attributes it to substance. Kant blames Dogmatism for having piled up contradictions in the doctrine of creation, such as infinite substance and finite substances, determinations of existence by time and space, etc.[1] To his mind existence is *one*, and all the distinction we can make between "finite" and "infinite" is that we have the power to think distinctly the unknowable, which lies at the bottom of all phenomena, although without any sort of empirical determinations. Being "in itself," — this is Being which is both divine and universal: the *à priori* forms of time and space are only conditions of knowing, but in no wise objective conditions of existence. Kant often uses such expressions as "The supra-sensible substratum of phenomena may be considered as in us or outside of us."[2] Whence there proceeds the consequence (very remarkable for us) that if anything exists in the world it exists as *noumenon* outside of time and space[3] on the same grounds as Being in itself; and it also

The Kantian definition of Being. What Kant dreaded was Fanaticism, not Mysticism.

[1] *Crit. Raison pratique*, pp. 293, 294.

[2] *Crit. du Jugement*, t. i., p. 58.

[3] "When I say of beings of the sensible world that they are created I consider them as noumena. It would be quite otherwise if the beings of the world existed in time as things in themselves." (*Crit. Raison prat.*, p. 295.)

follows that our whole substance belongs to the world of reason, where it has its roots in Freedom.

This notion of Being, which Kant has left incomplete, will be misleading for Pantheism, but for ourselves we only take advantage of it so far as to give body to the symbolic intuitions of Mysticism. Kant says that there must be "some other intuition than sensible intuition in order to pass from the 'negative' sense of noumena to the 'positive' sense."[1] Mystics expect to find this in symbols through which the Absolute is revealed to Freedom, and if they find it there the thought of God will be on a firm foundation.

It is quite true that Kant declared himself opposed to both Mysticism and Dogmatism, but for different reasons. Doubtless we are radically incapable of knowing anything beyond phenomena; but why does Kant deny the rational character of the postulates of Ethics? Why does he not demand from Theology explanations which would have allowed him to find a better foundation for Freedom and Duty than the instincts, such far-off revelations of an unknowable Being? Kant feared Fanaticism. He knew how quick human impatience is to rush into the Unknown, and he knew that the dreams of free or orthodox beliefs are more hazardous for pure Reason than even the audacities of the metaphysical Reason. In his view, Mysticism either constructs God with concepts from the relativity of the ego (which he calls *superstition*), or else it claims to be a supra-sensible intuition, of equal value with experience

[1] *Critique de la Raison pure*, t. i., p. 319.

(which he calls *fanaticism*).[1] He would have the idea of God serve only to form the synthesis of happiness and duty in the concept of "Supreme Good," but the synthesis is subjective, answers only to the needs of Ethics, and is not supposed to react upon pure Reason for an instant.

Relativity, we believe, should not end in so mutilating the mind, but it should tend simply to a division of the efforts to know, that better results may be obtained. Consciousness is a common centre towards which all experiences tend: some of these evade all power of measurement or scientific determination: they must be considered as à priori, or at least, as too subjective to be positively explained. It is only the others which are to be considered in time and space, and, as objects of measure, belonging to science.

II. But what are we to do with this *à priori* which is our very mind itself? If it is to become the property of Mysticism, at least, we cannot yield ourselves to every folly rashly committed in its name. There is nothing in Mysticism whereby to extend experience: it adds nothing to the sensible intuitions nor to the categories of the understanding. Nevertheless, when we come to final generalizations, and reach by natural means some abiding system, we ought to be very sure that the whole content of the consciousness has been put into the work of systematizing. Should there still remain, out of us, or in us, a *given* something, real or not real, which is not included in the limits of this ideal construction, the mind will be

The Kantian *à priori* (the mind) calls for another *à priori* (the Noumenon or Absolute), into which Mysticism alone dares to penetrate.

[1] *Critique Raison prat.*, p. 351.

invincibly impelled to seek new means of subsuming itself, and with itself all things, in some more comprehensive experience.

We cannot suffer our consciousness to remain divided up for any length of time, nor can we suffer a portion of our events, called phenomena, to be examined with the express reservation that no one shall see those which are claimed to be shut up in the impenetrable noumenon. Not only do we think of noumena, but they are constantly coming into view in the field of intellectual vision, and the place they occupy is a larger one than that of clear conceptions called science. Distinct vision is but a small "portion of total vision." "Clear consciousness is but a small portion of total consciousness."[1] As no one can prevent the natural exercise of thought, the mind never ceases to substantialize phenomena, save in exceptional cases of intense abstraction, and feels no certitude unless it rests on its sense of the Absolute.

Science, too, is only one way of harmonizing our mind with things, and there are other ways. Esthetics itself is an agreement between the mind and things. Kant saw this clearly, in spite of the distinction which he tries to establish between the "determining" judgment and the "reflective" judgment. Another adjustment of the ego to Being, still more transcendent than pleasure and knowledge, is Duty. Mystics aspire to a full and perfect life of the soul; their desire is to be in harmony with the Absolute under as many relationships as the Absolute in itself has modes of Being.

[1] Ribot, *Les maladies de la Personnalité*, p. 122.

They love, then, Nature, Art, Duty; but moral Good comes before everything else, and it is by embracing it that they enter and take possession of all the other modes of consciousness which seem exempt from relativity.

III. Whether Mysticism is to profit or not by the conclusions of Criticism, we must recognize that the two methods work for truth by utterly opposite paths. On one side circumspection and the fear of antinomies beset Reason at each step, as though it were impossible to arrive at pure intellection unless the imagination is withdrawn from all influences of desire. On the other side is the greatest confidence in all its influences. Truth is left to form itself in the totality of the consciousness instead of being strictly confined to the rational consciousness. Mysticism draws away the attention from intellectual operations to the moral quality of the desires, which it aims at rendering absolutely pure: the belief is that purity of intention will bring with it intellectual clarity: *amare videre est.* But Criticism proposes only the direct discipline of Reason: and Ethics itself seems to Criticism to depend upon its sifting.

The work of Criticism is to correct Reason without checking the other initiatives of the soul. The postulates of Criticism give no intellectual standpoint unless some mystic certainty is added.

It is not impossible, however, to bring these two methods together for the guidance of the mind, in the same way that efforts for Freedom combine, in the order politic, with the directing force which leads them to tend towards the good of the State. There is in fact an intelligence which is purely administrative, with inflexible rules, chiefly prohibitory, whose first care is to ward off the initiatives of

folly and the propositions of caprice, but there is nothing in this intelligence to feed upon for the nourishment of our lives. Our lives are fed by the reckless courage of genius, by the creations of art and science which the State serves only to distribute and regulate. Neither will modern thought take its life from Criticism: it has taken from it only admonitions and a sort of experimental constitution which it is useful to refer to often. But if there is any intellectual method which tends to keep alive the soul's initiatives and leave free access to all that can reach us through the senses, the imagination, and the Reason, it is Mysticism such as we shall show it to be, true "faculty of valor," [1] and above all things else, free and disinterested.

Kant had an idea to create a region of intellectual suppositions which should lie between Empiricism and Dogmatism,[2] and in such a region, which belongs to no one, the mystic consciousness would have full play. Who would there be to disturb it so long as no scientific character is claimed for any of its assertions? There is another side, however, where Mysticism possesses experiences (at least it has this conviction) for which the term "intellectual suppositions" is not enough.[3]

Although Freedom, sustained by pure Reason, may not venture to give her aspirations more than a hypothetical

[1] Maimonide, *Livre des Egarés*, ch. xviii.

[2] *Crit. Raison pure*, t. ii., p. 82.

[3] Kant does not foresee with a generous eye the use that might be made of the hypotheses outlined in his critique: their use to him is as means to put a stop to contrary hypotheses. "*The hypotheses have no intrinsic value as opinion, but only as relating to contrary transcendent assertions.*" (*Crit. R. pure*, t. ii., p. 245.)

value, the mystic consciousness believes itself to possess means of going further. When once it has entered upon relations with the Absolute, by means of symbols, then it begins to talk of *experience*, and leaves behind the term "postulates." It claims then to express to itself, in the inmost tribunal, "truths" and no longer desires or "postulates of truth." We shall examine whence mystics receive this assurance, not a scientific assurance, it is true, but one which does not content itself with merely "putting a stop to contrary transcendent assertions."

## § IV. — RATIONALISM

I. Thought is not in equation with its object; and Evidence does not come from things only. How Character influences Knowledge, specially in moral matters.

II. Dogmatism is a stiff-mindedness which is opposed to the needs of Knowledge.

I. We come now to Rationalism, which also refuses to receive any knowledge that is not pure of every element of will, and so interprets the definition *æquatio rei et intellectus*. The value of knowledge, to the Rationalist, lies in the exclusion of the will, whenever it might prove an element of indeterminateness; knowledge coming from the inevitable conjunction of the mind and things, we very soon arrive, by this course, at the rigid formula, "All will to believe is reason to doubt."

Thought is not in equation with its object; and Evidence does not come from things only. How Character influences Knowledge, specially in moral matters.

Perhaps for this reason and on account of the purely intellectualist principle which dogmatism has thought right to assume, it is not in a position to complete knowledge.

Neither can mysticism do this, but it offers nevertheless an intellectual standpoint where there is more repose, and yet where freedom of thought is not abandoned.

Descartes stopped at "cogito," and on this first fact based the whole value of our cognitions; but he saw, almost at the same glance, that he did not yet hold the final assurance, and that he would have to go farther and higher than the fact of consciousness. He rises to the idea of the Infinite, and seeks in the divine veritable, a criterion still further back of Evidence. At this point dogmatism is left behind: Reason has aspired to transcendence, and Mysticism appears at the heart of Philosophy. Thought has not lost its character of invariable equation with things, but it has only managed to grasp itself by a transcendent affirmation, and (whatever Descartes says) by an act of Will. The Evidence, which Science was depending upon, is itself subject to the idea of Infinity which our minds "postulate" rather than conceive.

The principle *æquatio rei et intellectus* must be modified by venturing to admit that morality furthers knowledge without introducing therein the least germ of indeterminateness. Every cognition, of whatever order it may be, contains an objective element which is susceptible of proof: but, as it also contains over and above some *à priori* element which comes only from the subject itself, it may be said that the Demonstration never completes itself, and in certain cases does not go very far.

The mind of man is in direct communication with things, in such a way that it receives act and motion from them before the logical and artificial processes have had time to

intervene. The mind not only "receives" by this communication, but it puts itself into things so quickly that the instant which really divides the stimulus from the reaction is imperceptible.

The will comes in at every degree of knowing, and the consequent subjectivity introduced has been too often unrecognized.[1] The sensible eludes the metaphysical because it contains some other thing beside the elements of knowledge. When we cease to remember that the chief reason why the subject cares about things is *to get life from them*, we are no longer in the way of truth. The sensible is something "given" in relation to the subject and *for it*, even before we are allowed to consider it in relation with universal Being and Becoming. What does this mean, if not that from this moment there is, as it were, an interpenetration of the subject into the object, and that an element of subjectivity has mingled with our first representations, never to leave them again. Before we have consciousness, therefore, of any abstraction, the will may have already set the mind in motion, and it may have already decided according to the moral qualities of the subject whether it will follow or take its stand against the things which transcend sensations. The priority of the will over all other facts of consciousness has been empirically established.[2] Although this unconscious willing has as yet

[1] "The assent which we give to such ideas as seem imposed upon us of necessity, is essentially practical and subjective in nature. *We are obliged always to put into it a little willingness.*" (Brochard, *De la croyance.* Rev. phil., t. xviii. p. 12.) There could nothing better be said.

[2] See Preyer, *L'âme de l'enfant*, pp. 190, 191.

nothing more of its true "name" than a "motion" it is true, nevertheless, that the soul is posited as an activity first of all. Thus will it be to the end of its evolution, and it is this which gives advantage to the position of mysticism. By this method love comes first in relation to knowledge.

When once character is thus mingled with knowing there is no logical necessity which can separate them, and therefore we might justly say that "all will to believe is reason to doubt," if we mean by "will" the foregone decision of the senses against Reason. But does not this phrase lend itself equally well to the contrary acceptation, and is not the state of "attention," whence proceed nearly all our intellectual differences, an eager and earnest act of will? — a moral attitude, which we find it hard to take, between the inevitableness of the sensations and the subjectiveness of the desires, so that truth, living and immutable, may be ours? But, above all, when the question is of things touching Freedom, and when we have exceeded the limits of strictly scientific matter, we must no longer expect light to spring from these things themselves, or at least not from them alone. In that case the distinction must be clearly drawn between logical certainty and a mingled certainty of Reason and morality. As Plato intimates in these words of the Phædrus (245 B.): "Ἡ δὲ δὴ ἀπόδειξις ἔσται δεινοῖς μὲν ἄπιστος, σοφοῖς δὲ πιστή,"[1] and as we find again in Kant.[2] It is not possible in practice, as we see, to hold only the things whose cer-

[1] And the proof shall be one which the wise will receive and the witling disbelieve. — JOWETT.

[2] See *Crit. Raison pratique*, p. 370.

tainty we arrive at through dialectics: certain questions inevitably present themselves to the Reason and as illimitably hide themselves from Reason, and hence their name of *Postulates*. We shall perhaps never have any certitude for such questions, unless we agree to supply our rational insufficiency by some exercise of morals. The nature of this supplementary evidence, however, is such that far from fearing the menace of Dogmatism, that "all will to believe is reason to doubt," we might return it in these words: "*all desire to doubt is reason to believe.*"

II. No opinion should be in the least branded with condemnation, for have we not seen them all, contradictory as they may have been, equally supported in turn by the high character of their inventors? But here it is the method that is in question, and we think that, beyond the limits of exact knowledge, Dialectics are not so safe a guide as the suggestions of the moral consciousness. Nothing belonging to pure Reason would be usurped by the will, it seems to us, if, in questions of the Soul, Freedom, etc., which Reason has left undecided, it were to add in the balance, in order to draw out conviction, an element of moral order, *motives for the better*. Besides (and this is an important point), if good-will were not allowed to fill this part, egoism might step in and occupy it. Such was Pascal's opinion. "I say that the heart loves universal being naturally and loves itself naturally, *according to whichever it devotes itself:* and it hardens itself against the one or the other as it chooses." [1]

Dogmatism is a stiff-mindedness which is opposed to the needs of knowledge.

[1] *Pensées*, éd. Havet. art. xxiv., 5.

When we reach the point where scientific knowing is exhausted, knowledge is far from being complete: but all that remains to be known, thence onward, is only for the needs of conduct and for purely moral ends. Our whole power of penetration henceforth comes from active powers, from Freedom. Not that all the rest is given over to indeterminateness and to the waywardness of Desire; but the will now has the precedence, and must go on to create the good in itself in order that the Intelligence may look within, instead of looking without, for that Good which can no longer be expressed in concepts. In order to apprehend moral things, we must see them done, not only under our eyes, but in ourselves, in the identity of the "ego" which comprehends them only because it produces them.

Dogmatism is animated by the hope of discovering original being whence all things proceed logically and really; but, so far, there have been no conclusions reached capable of uniting all minds. No one, perhaps, has seemed to touch the limit of explanations in the purely dialectical way, like Spinoza, and in no other system has the illusion of the "simple" and the "one-all" been given, as in that Determinism of the divine substance. But Reason cannot live upon illusion, even the most learned; it has intuitions, which, discarded for a moment, come back to us the instant we cease listening to the cunning voice of the sophist. Those intuitions of Freedom, Causality, Pleasure, etc., which Spinoza would have fused together as "necessity" quickly resume their rights, and are constantly presenting themselves as distinctly to science as to common-sense. Being,

the foundation of all things, rebels against rigid formulæ. We must either give up the hope of knowing it, or we must not press it too hard, but let it flow into us from the outside through all the channels of sense, of Reason, and desire. "We have no communication with being, because all human nature is always in a state midway between birth and death, knowing itself only as an obscure appearance and shadow, and a kind of unfixed and debile opinion: and if by chance a man sends his thought out to grasp his being, it is neither more nor less than though he tried to hold a handful of water: the more tight he squeezes and presses that which by nature flows everywhere, the more he loses all he would grasp and hold." [1]

The Absolute will not be circumscribed any more by ventures of Freedom than by exercise of Dialectic, but it is a good thing to combine the two, in order, at least, to augment our intellectual satisfaction; and mystics are not wrong when they trust Love even a little more than they trust pure Reason. In truth, the inmost depth of things is not composed of a matter that is fixed and definable in precise outline: it eludes reason like a fluid, or rather like life itself, which even more perfectly than water *flows everywhere*. It appears, then, that only by adapting ourselves with mind and heart and the whole soul to the various manifestations of Being, without partiality for either science or logic, can we hope to realize it. Chiefly shall we succeed when the secrets of Morals and Freedom are concerned and when we are seeking them as vital for life and to make us good in all the relations of life.

[1] Montaigne, *Essais*, éd. Charpentier, p. 380.

There is no other means of getting possession of the Absolute than by adapting ourselves to it, and when once it has *first* taken possession of us, we acquire experience of it in ourselves.

The scientific method, succeeding the scholastic, seems to have subjected Reason to a rigor which was not intended for it. A larger place should have been reserved for the naïve thoughts which grow, better than anywhere else, in the mystic consciousness. No doubt the whole character of our civilization would have been the better for it. "Progress in its march has lost more than one quality of the savage which we regret, and which we try in vain to find again in some unavailing renewal of the past."[1]

[1] Tylor, *La civilisation primitive*, t. i., p. 139.

# CHAPTER SECOND

## THE MYSTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

### § I. — INADEQUACY OF THE RATIONAL ABSOLUTE

I. The Universal has to be brought back to the Necessary, and the Necessary to the Good.

II. No one can conceive the Good or think the Absolute by means of the categories.

I. Is it the part of pure Reason to construct the idea of the Absolute? May there not be some other way above Reason whereby to cognize it? The synthesis of the world and the ego, of object and subject, eludes dialectics, and the mystic consciousness alone dares even hazard this synthesis. There is nothing but a controlled and dispassionate Mysticism, one which acknowledges both the objective laws of knowing, and the transcendent nature of the Subject, which can effect that union of Metaphysics and Morals so much desired to-day by the best minds. Reason, in its aspirations for the Absolute, finds only the Universal. But the universal has no meaning, and it is not permissible even to concern ourselves with it separately, except so far as we possess, outside of Space and Time, some basis for the unification of Experience with even that which exists or may exist under other conditions. It is not the act of

The Universal has to be brought back to the Necessary, and the Necessary to the Good.

Reason to seek for an empirical character general enough to subsume in itself all data of the senses, but to create, without the aid of experience, a character dominating enough to gather into the Unity even the Unknowable, should it come under our cognizance in some manner.

The universal, which is not at the same time the necessary, is not worth defending against the negations of the most ordinary Empiricism. Necessity, however, as we have already seen, is not found to exist within the strict limits of the understanding. The universal and substantive copula *est* has but one logical use, and introduces nothing new into the consciousness: there must be another copula to enable us to interpret experience in a really rational way. We find it in *fiat*, which expresses "pure act," and enables us to pass from the possible to being. But at this point we touch on subjective data, no longer possessing the evidence of empirical facts, and incapable of being brought with them to the condition of a science.

If any interpretation of the Absolute exists, it will be found in the union of the two terms "the Possible" or the Indeterminate, and "the Act" or the Determinate, and they present themselves to us, together, as the principle of the intelligible and of being. Metaphysics then would have but two points left as definitive basis, namely: Act, which is the ultimate depth of consciousness, and Matter, which is our ultimate conception of the "outer" or the non-ego. Or we might say that to him alone who willed to think the Absolute would the Good belong: for what is Matter, from whatever point we see it, except the power to exist

at that place where Act comes in to raise the possible to the dignity of Good?

It must be recognized, however, that speculative Reason is powerless to build a metaphysical system upon this foundation, and the argument that "what is, ought to be," brings nothing new into the consciousness. By the aid of the categories we can think only things empirically given; but how, then, shall we find schema whereby to think the Good, and points of juncture to fix it in some region of the mind? We shall see that Mysticism has no other function except to supply this want by means of symbols. The important thing to observe here is that the more interior and attached to the consciousness is the idea of God, the more firm and solid it is. The objective method could only lead us to an Absolute without consistence, whose attributes could not well stand against the antinomies of the Critique. The rational Absolute is nothing but the extreme point where we arbitrarily suspend causality, continuous and successive magnitude, nothing but an artifice to arrest the indefinite progression of our ideas. Rationalism is, in fact, only very imperceptibly separated from Positivism.

II. The method of Reflection, which is *par excellence* the method of mystics, has been too severely criticised. Have those persons who accuse mystics of anthropomorphism any other principles to use for metaphysical explanations than the original and unverifiable affirmations of the consciousness?

No one can conceive the Good or think the Absolute by means of the categories.

What have the strictest Dogmatists done? Spinoza excludes, in his definition of God, thoughts in the sense of

"representations," but he admits into it substantial Thought with Extension. In the same way we find at the basis of all metaphysical systems some fact of consciousness more or less elementary and fundamental. It may be that it is a destructive basis, but it is none the less true that every attempt to pass beyond pure science commences with an analogy, and implies this passage from the ego to the non-ego, which, we are compelled to avow, Mysticism has too guilelessly abused. When we say that consciousness gives, in addition to the sensations, only the sense of difference, of succession, and of relations having no other reality than sensations themselves, we are confining ourselves within the empirical consciousness, and refusing to make a real act of reflection. The phenomena which arrange themselves in our mind, and the categories which serve to conceptualize them, are altogether nothing but forms. The mind carries in it these forms, but they are not the mind itself. By reflection we traverse this whole representative region of the consciousness; we go further, and it is when we begin to form in ourselves such wholly interior acts as *I will, I ought, I am,* that we touch immaterial identity. There we are outside of Time, outside of relations, and although such apperception may be too subjective for representation, it asserts itself with as much persistence as do the sensations. For the discomfiture of subjectivism it has been challenged to express its discoveries in literal terms. This is poor warfare. Are there any words whereby to express directly the elementary sensations? It suffices that each one can tell himself the first affirmations of consciousness, be they em-

pirical or moral, and only by subsequent labor can they be compared so as to be expressed analogically. In this inmost depth of the ego, itself unthinkable, lies the source of all mystic experiences. Symbols are the most intimate of all signs, and are analogies created spontaneously by the consciousness to enable it to express to itself the things which have no empirical objectivity.

## § II. — MYSTIC SYNTHESIS

I. Mysticism declares God to be the assemblage of first principles "Known of the Heart," whose synthesis can only be made symbolically.

II. The formula "I live, yet not I, but God in me."

I. The concept of the Absolute, as it exists in the consciousness of the pure scholar or the pure logician, is the poorest of all in content. Not only is the idea of God fuller in the mystic consciousness, but it appears to develop facts of consciousness of a nature to demand special attention. The mystic experience is neither the work of the senses nor of the understanding; and we shall get rid of much apparent contradiction while estimating its effects, if we remember that it is not concepts, to be verified objectively, which mystic synthesis tends to present to the consciousness, but quite another thing.

Mysticism declares God to be the assemblage of first principles "Known of the Heart," whose synthesis can only be made symbolically.

The mental synthesis which it is the part of mysticism to make gives rise to symbols and not concepts, thus occupying a middle ground between the idealism which logically abstracts God from man, and the anthropomorphism which

does not make sufficient distinction between God and man. Kant has said on this subject: "It is an error of recent logicians to use the word *symbolic* to designate the mode of representation which is opposed to the intuitive mode: for the symbolic mode is only a species of the intuitive: The latter, in fact, may be divided into the *schematic* mode and the *symbolic* mode. Both of them are hypotyposes, that is, exhibitions. If knowledge may already be called a simple mode of representation, then all knowledge of God is simply symbolic, and the person who regards it as schematic falls into anthropomorphism, just as he who discards every species of intuitive mode falls into deism, or into that system according to which we know absolutely nothing of God, not even from the practical point of view."[1]

Why should we insist on the relation between Mysticism and pure Science? The two states unfortunately are rarely found actualized in the same consciousness, and they war from afar without ever having seen each other. The whole web of the empirical consciousness is made up of original intuitions given by the senses. Is there also some *given* thing in the mystic consciousness? Pascal seemed to think so, and he called this other sense, which has quite as much to reveal as empirical intuition, "the Heart." Only, Pascal's idea hovers between the Reason of the dogmatists and the intuitive Love of the mystics. He has, moreover, omitted to explain the relation between the "Heart" and the senses which supply the heart with all the material for symbols. That there are intuitions into which Freedom enters is the thing we need

[1] *Critique du Jugem.* t. ii., trad. Barni, pp. 334–336.

to retain of the opinion so succinctly expressed by Pascal. "The Heart," he says, "feels first principles." It is impossible to know Space, Life, Motion, etc., dialectically, as metaphysicians attempt, and yet perhaps Freedom enters into these intuitions. In very truth, God is not any one, more than another, of these first principles, but rather the synthesis of them all. The question is, how to effect this synthesis in our minds. Here again, it is for the Heart only to make the venture, we think. It is Love which has command of the whole consciousness, and which takes all the spontaneities, the senses, the Reason, etc., into its service.

The empirical consciousness has an "object." We shall see that the mystical consciousness has an object too, and that Pascal says with truth that "*the Heart feels.*" No doubt there must remain something in common at the disposal of the intuitive faculties, the senses, the Reason, etc.; the very definition of objectivity requires it. The intuitions of mysticism are not wanting in this character, as will appear, only we must not look for objectivity in the symbolic constructions which arise after the heart has been mystically aroused. A moral element exists which is stable and common to all men, although all men are not conscious of it in the same degree; and it is that element which lies at the bottom of all symbols. To go over the whole field of representative consciousness, and let ourselves be guided by analogy to that innermost depth of Freedom and pure activity in which the Absolute reveals itself will be our task.

Naïveté is as much an element of Mysticism as Reason, and this feature distinguishes it from the reflective wisdom

which seeks for purely intellectual intuitions of the Absolute. We may legitimately expect a preponderance of Freedom over the understanding in Mysticism, and the term *mystic* should be applied only to minds that have sought the Absolute in other than dialectical ways. When, after long processes of reasoning, we seem to touch the confines of the purely intelligible in some culminating point of consciousness, we must be careful not to mistake such rational appearance for the *mystic fact*. To give an example. No one ever tried more eagerly than Saint Augustine to obtain some intuition of God. At the term of all his efforts and when he reached by reflection the "arbitral" act of Reason,[1] he felt himself powerless to fix that which he believed to be focussed on his inner gaze, and in confusion fell back into the region of images. If mystics get beyond this point, it is by a very special use of the imagination, about which we must learn. Saint Augustine understood it perfectly well, but his purely metaphysical genius did not lend itself to this sort of experience. "I got as far," he says, "as the thinking force which is myself . . . I had a flashing gleam of you, O my God, and then immediately sinking backward I said, 'Who can go further? Shall I seek visions? Many have tried them and have found only illusions.'"[2]

II. Before any reflective act is made, the mystical consciousness is impelled to effect in itself the synthesis of first principles. To be sure, it has no other initiative than "the Heart," and belongs specially to the interior kingdom of the Good, but no merely

The formula "I live, yet not I, but God in me."

[1] *Judex Ratio*, Conf. l. x. ch. vi. 4.

[2] Conf. l. x. ch. xl.–xlii.

"moral" good in the rationalist sense would be capable of satisfying its craving, which is for God. It is useless for us to try to isolate the moral consciousness and declare that the Absolute dwells only in that region of the mind, for, if we have once felt the Absolute in the "ought-to-be," we experience invincibly the suggestion that it must be in nature. Indeed, how could we grasp the supremacy of the "ought-to-be," which is the very consciousness of the Absolute, except by representing to ourselves in some way the subordination of All to Good, that is, by making, more or less, the synthesis of Determinism and Freedom, *under the sovereign impress of an identity which covers both the ego and the non-ego?* Reason fails when it tries to make this synthesis unaided, and it has to reject, one after another, every representation which, it would seem, might make God objectively present; but, if we leave free course to desire, under the single safeguard of Good Will, the soul is uplifted, and the empirical consciousness and the moral consciousness unite freely in an act whose only purpose is to render the Good subjectively present or "known of the Heart." In this way symbols are born.

What, then, is the mystic consciousness but the moral consciousness enriched with symbolic representations? The Soul, controlled by Desire, manifests a particular activity which has been called "Inspiration." Certain things which a man ordinarily feels in his deeper consciousness and very confusedly, such as *the dignity of the Person, the efficacy of Repentance, Merit and Demerit, moral Peace,* etc., etc., all press towards recognition, and Freedom appeals direct to the

imagination for more light on these things, as there is none to be expected from Speculative Reason. How far is it possible for the consciousness to go in this direction? Will the Absolute which dwells in Freedom (and which out of it is but a name) allow itself to be apprehended by means of symbols? The mystic consciousness believes this in all simplicity and lives upon the belief. It may be alleged that all it does is to identify itself with this object, which, the more it is possessed by it, the less it is able to define. The mystic experience ends with the words "I live, yet not I, but God in me." This feeling of identification, which is the last point of mystic experience, contains a very important meaning. In the initial stages the mystic consciousness feels the Absolute in opposition to the ego, from without as Determinism and from within as Duty. As the mystic action goes on, the opposition decreases, and the tendency is to create a subjective greatness, of which we will say nothing now, except that it is altogether different from the negative Infinite which Rationalism proposes for our conception by simply taking away the limits of continuous greatness. Finally, when the mystic activity has reached its term, the consciousness finds itself possessed with the sense of a Being both *in excess of* the ego, and at the same time *identical* with it: great enough to be God, intimate enough to be me. The objectivity might then be called "*excessivity*." We present the following words of Saint Augustine's as subject of meditation: —

"Nec ego ipse capio totum quod sum. . . . Ergo animus ad habendum seipsum angustus est? Quomodo ergo non capit? — Quid amo cum Deum meum amo? quis est ille

super caput animæ meæ? Quis enarrabit? Quid est illud quod interlucet mihi et percutet cor meum sine læsione; et inhorresco et inardesco. Inhorresco in quantum dissimilis ei sum; inardesco in quantum similis ei sum." [1]

## § III. — SCIENCE AND MYSTICISM

I. Relations between the mystic Experience and Knowledge.
II. The mystic method.

Relations between the mystic Experience and Knowledge.

I. We must be on our guard against believing that mysticism has anything to do towards completing science, and that it springs from a need to satisfy the rational consciousness in its restless demand for the Unknowable. Nevertheless Spencer expresses the following opinion: "Religious sentiment establishes its transcendent beliefs with materials furnished by science: its conceptions are submitted to the law of evolution. It may not fabricate them arbitrarily, nor may it take from the conceptions of epochs of ignorance elements which contradict the positive notions of more enlightened epochs. It has to remember that, the conception which it adopts being a pure symbol and inadequate, *it can only be valid by conformity with the highest scientific conceptions.*" [2] The materials which the mystic consciousness works with are not at all "the highest scientific conceptions," but everything which may serve its purpose of procuring consciousness of the Absolute. No one is a mystic from a feeling of helplessness, or because he refers the completion of knowledge to a supreme implicit,

[1] Conf. l. x. ch. viii. 5 & vii. 1; i. xi. ix. 1.
[2] *Premiers principes*, Intro. p. lxxvii.

filling us with the deep respect called "religious" *merely because it is Unknowable.*

Not to put ourselves in opposition to science is excellent advice, no doubt, but it is advice which true mysticism does not need, since the paths of science and mysticism never meet at any point. The mystic consciousness takes nothing from the empirical consciousness but the symbolic elements. It does aspire to make the synthesis of the world and the ego, to be sure, but not in the understanding. No supreme generalization is presented to the mind through the symbols which it constructs, but the whole object of the mystic consciousness is centred on forming symbols of the utmost power of suggestion, in order to make God "known of the heart." The mystic consciousness is in no wise inferior to science. Indeed, were we to compare them, the former would seem to be more truly the supreme activity of the mind. Science has no means at all of knowing first principles. "The Heart feels first principles." Extension, Matter, Time, have their origin ideally in Motion, and Motion is actually in the consciousness only as Force. There is but one Force, however, of which we have direct cognizance, and that force is our own free activity. In this way we find Metaphysics rejected from the Understanding, and without firm support anywhere except on the foundation of Morals. The categories emanate from that source of pure activity in which the Infinite declares itself: but as soon as they unite with the intuitions to organize experience, they no longer belong in the metaphysical zone of the mind.

But how can the Infinite declare itself in the consciousness? Must there not be for this other intuitions, other categories, and, in short, a completely new experience? In fact, this is a difficulty out of which the soul finds its own way. Without ceasing to believe in science, it keeps forever writing something on the blank page of the Absolute, *but it does not write in the same characters which objective science uses.*[1] The soul can write only in symbols, and an impulse of the Heart or moral desire is required to make them manifest. Then, too, only those who write them can read them.[2] And yet this does not prove that there is only subjectivity in mysticism. If there were nothing in it but the setting free of the mental conditions which lead all of us to states of defined consciousness and to identical intuitions, the only place for mysticism would be the inferior regions of Freedom, amid dreams and passions. But our inquiries are specially designed to examine whether the mystical consciousness has not certain fixed and definable psychological conditions to rest upon. Certain well-established facts of consciousness exist which as yet we, as a whole, are only just beginning to experience, because we cannot use for them the forms of representation of which the understanding is universally capable. On the other hand, when we wish to carry this experience further, it is natural for us to resort to the same analogical processes and to enter more or less evidently into a *symbolical* state of consciousness. It is

[1] Liard, *La Science positive et la Métaphysique*, p. 357.

[2] Desiderium sinus cordis est: capiemus, si desiderium, quantum possumus, extendamus. — Saint Augustine, *Expositio in Evang. Joan.*, tract. xi. ad finem.

this twofold basis of Mysticism which we wish to bring out into clearer light.

In actual truth the mystic consciousness has no reason to neglect science, only it is dealing with quite another affair, one which it is fully able to cope with, unless it diverges into Fanaticism or some other degraded form of Mysticism. Indeed, when the mystic soul, like the rest of the world, begins to undertake scientific investigations, it would seem that it should have even a purer Reason to bring to bear upon them because of its discipline by that sense of supreme order which is by no means a secondary factor of the mystic state. Yet, while bending under the yoke of the "scientific spirit" and "methods," it never loses sight for an instant of its free and naïve relations to God, and its aspirations are centred on a return to those relations. The ambition of mystics is for moral union with the Absolute. They desire to know, only that they may love, and their desire for union with the principles of things in God, who is the sum of them all, is founded on a feeling which is neither curiosity nor self-interest. The mystic soul loves, and all its efforts for knowledge are in view of this single need. As soon as the object of search is sufficiently present, as soon as God is felt, the search is at an end. To go further would be to step aside from the path of love, and to lose that pure vision which gives fineness of definition to the mystic gaze. The knowledge which has been sought for its own sake has never gone deep enough into things: to feel being has not been enough, and there has always been the desire to explain it, to master it. Whatever we may do, the torments

of the Unknowable will never cease. The great Sphinx, Nature, will forever be between the Absolute and our Heart, and no noble intelligence, whether mystic or scholar, can pass her by unmoved. We are too much *in* Nature, the Mystic believes, to know her; since to know is to master, we must go out from her, and see her in another aspect, as a state towards which we are *in viâ*.[1]

Mysticism is not to be confounded with any of the forms of agnosticism. It merits our best attention, for by it, states of consciousness, which could not be procured by the ordinary means of dialectics and experience, are accounted possible. We must be willing to make a careful study of "Inspiration" properly so called. It is, in fact, under this name that the mystic function has, so far, concealed itself from the investigations of psychology, and Criticism should devote its closest attention precisely to manifestations of this sort which, with more or less accuracy, we call *supernatural.*

If any one should ask, What is there, after all, in common between that state of definite consciousness called *knowledge* and the mystic consciousness? we should answer in few words: *The mystic consciousness creates for itself objects not of the world, but of the ego, and the state upon which it enters in identifying itself with these fictions is rather the contrary of that of knowledge, because knowledge calls forth that which is within us, while Mysticism only penetrates deeper and deeper within the subject by singular exer-*

[1] For now we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face. — 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

*cise of symbolism.* But, this being so, may any one proceed to say that the mystic experience is purely negative, and without human or general bearing? It would first have to be proved that the Subject can be completely resolved into the elements of scientific knowledge. That which mystics perceive in symbols could not be subsumed otherwise into the consciousness; but that is no reason to confound the mystic experience with the mental constructions in which our imagination merely expends its superfluous activity. All that Kant perceived underlying Freedom is the appreciable material of the mystical intuitions, and it has no access into the understanding. The material, however, is human and real, and therefore there is *experience* in Mysticism, and that mystics have the right to objectify certain facts of consciousness in order to obtain therefrom the idea of God, is simply because those facts cause in us a certain initial experience which cannot be had by means of direct knowledge.

The word "know" may be understood in a triple sense, according as it is applied to Science, to pure Reason, or to the mystic Consciousness. Science investigates facts from the outside: its aim is to go outside the consciousness to grasp things as "objects," that is to say, freed from the ego, its imaginations and its desires. *To know* is the word which responds to this ideal. Speculative Reason endeavors to bring things under modes of its own creation, to the native forms of the understanding, and finally to "Unity." Properly speaking, this is called *to think.* But Science, precisely for the reason that it wishes to remain objective, assimilates nothing, and alone would not add anything to

the intelligence. Reason also bears the stamp of relativity and is powerless to penetrate into Act pure and the region of first principles. But there remains a function which, if it exists, will help to make the synthesis of the ego and the non-ego, and will help to the knowledge of things, not under one aspect or under another, but in the Absolute. To knowledge of this sort, the word "*comprehend*" may be applied. No special means are afforded by the purely intellectual activity whereby we may come "to comprehend." Mystics set out with the conviction that, through Freedom, potentially they are in possession of the Infinite, and therefore they give themselves up with boundless confidence to the effort to imagine the Absolute. If the symbols created spontaneously by the mystic consciousness have in them anything that is positive, it must be frankly acknowledged that whatever it is, is not determinable in concepts. The consciousness feels itself to be raised by these symbols above all its other representations, victorious over its relative desires, and joined to the "Kingdom of ends," but it is a means whereby God is revealed only to the Heart, that is to say, to each man and for each one alone.

Mysticism contains only a moral inspiration which must be understood to be transcendent, and which eludes method. But for this reason need we see in it an order of irregular facts, and take no account of it at all in the study and in the education of the human soul? Far from it. It is natural to Freedom to exceed all possible prevision and to create sane visions in the consciousness, as it is natural to the understanding to define the consciousness and to fix it

within the objective conditions of knowledge. Reason itself forbids us to bind down under laws the naïve efforts which we call "Inspiration," and which Freedom employs to attract the whole consciousness towards the Good.

II. Nevertheless, Reason, in the broadest sense of the word, must command even the mystic consciousness itself. The mystical faculty is in reality the moral consciousness confided to its own sole initiative. Its logic consists in trusting in the moral purity of the will, or in other terms, *in the rationality of the Desire*, for the assurance even of its intellectual guidance. After its highest flights, Mysticism must always return to practical reason in order to be sure that all was not a dream. It owes to itself a rational account of its relations to the Absolute which have been obtained by means of symbols, and it recognizes that they are founded upon analogy only, that is to say, that God has appeared in the consciousness in no other modes except those proper to himself. Real mystics therefore will never be heard to say that they have found what all metaphysicians are looking for, because first principles do not appear to them under schemata to be used objectively; yet on another side, if they are forced to express their experiences dialectically, they are able to defend the content of those experiences against every attack of contradiction. From his vision on Mount Horeb Moses derives the great proposition "I am that I am." Isaiah wakens from an ecstasy bringing with him the words "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord." Peter translates the symbol of the sheet filled with all manner of animals into the axiom of "universal

The mystic method.

salvation." Thus, when the mystic eye is pure it sees in God only such things as add to the moral and rational life of humanity, according to the degree in which the Absolute is infused in the consciousness. In the end it is Reason which must give its seal of approval to the results of Inspiration. In what other way could we distinguish those results from the inferior suggestions which Desire often imposes on the consciousness, under cover of the Good?

Is it possible to lay claim to such a thing as "mystic Evidence"? The same principles which serve to found science cannot give assurance to the mystic consciousness, but it need seek no other evidence than moral Evidence. Consciousness is the seat of intuitions twofold in their nature: it receives sensations from contact with things, and it feels within itself requirements not adapted to anything material or objective. The same Reason which governs this life of inner consciousness, presides over the empirical combinations which result in Science, as well as over the mystical constructions whose elements we draw from in our Freedom. It does not seem to us that certitude varies with the form of our cognitions, which may be logical or esthetical or mathematical, but that it varies according as the intuitions which serve as their matter are "empirical" or "moral." For example, in the same way that the mathematical sciences may be reduced to empirical intuitions (unless, like Pascal, we prefer to refer them to the *Heart*), all mystical facts must be considered as moral affirmations of the consciousness. Unless the consciousness passes to the

symbolic state, it has no other moral certainty than a few axioms of very ordinary evidence: but it aspires, nevertheless, to possess, in addition, everything which is contained in Freedom, and it succeeds, by certain means which are to be learned, in giving to itself new certainties as well grounded as the pure and simple affirmation of Duty. The evidence which mystics ordinarily attribute to testimony direct from the Absolute to the consciousness, could not carry with it any authority specifically distinct from the moral evidence, otherwise there would have to be a basis of intuitions of some unknown middle form, between the senses and the affirmations of Freedom. *Divine* evidence is nothing more than moral evidence, carried to its highest degree under the joint influence of symbols and holiness. This will be thought the right appellation by those who believe that nothing approaches man so near to the Absolute as moral transcendence, yet it is no reason why the consciousness should be thrown into confusion, nor why Reason should be removed from its sovereignty. The synthesis of first principles as made in the mystic consciousness reaches only to a clearer and more intense realization of our moral transcendence than is usual in our ordinary state, and this is the revelation of the infinite dwelling in our Freedom. Anywhere outside of this, it is not worth more than a dream.

It has been difficult for Mysticism, which is perhaps nothing but the tendency of the moral desire to possess the whole consciousness, to respect the integrity of the human mind by carefully keeping apart the empirical and the moral affirmations of the consciousness. By confusing the two a

bizarre sort of subjectivity has often resulted, barring out scientific observation. To deprive the world of its objective signification would be to turn it into a vast symbol, with no other destiny than to furnish points of departure for Inspiration and Faith, and in the midst of such confusions Reason itself would be imperilled.

We have gone to three of the chief mystical authors to find the elements for a logic of Mysticism. If any one will consult the texts, he will see for himself that its logic is nothing else than a progressive leading on, culminating in ecstasy, and that its first step is to destroy the equilibrium between the moral verity and the objective reality and thus leave no foothold for Reason.

Hugo de Saint-Victor, in *De Contemplatione et ejus speciebus*[1] sets forth the method by which the soul is led to pure verity — to God. The first three degrees of mystical activity are reading, soliloquy, and judgment, — three acts of a nature to lead us to a contempt, not merely practical but speculative, of things in time.[2] "Of the highest degree of contemplation there are three kinds which three theologians have designated by three names. Job calls it *suspense*, St. John *silence*, and Solomon *sleep*. Of silence there are three kinds, the silence of the lips, the silence of thought, and the silence of reason. When the soul is completely withdrawn into its inner kingdom, the lips are mute; thought, not being able to comprehend in any way the ineffable joy it receives, can say nothing, and reason too is condemned to silence, for when the Sanctuary of thought

[1] Bibl. nat., Nos. 14366 and 14872. [2] *Ibid.* ch. i., ii., iii.

is inundated with divine unction human reason has no longer anything to do. Intoxicated with this perfume it is overcome with the sleep of celestial felicity and sinks into rest melting under the kisses of the supreme light. There are three kinds of sleep for the soul, because all, three of its energies are suspended by the same ravishing power. Then while in blissful repose, forgetful of the world, forgetful of self, it has a beatific vision, before the throne, upon the throne of God. The soul's reason sleeps, because, ignorant of the cause of such a happiness, it is incapable of conceiving its origin, its present reality, and its end. The memory sleeps because it is completely absorbed in the enjoyment of an ineffable satisfaction and recalls nothing of what it has suffered. The will sleeps because it does not even know that it is experiencing the delights of the indescribable intoxication. This is why the Apostle says '*He who joins himself to God becomes one spirit with him.*' The soul, thus dead to the world and to itself, sleeps in bliss, and yields itself utterly to the kisses of the spouse, in absolute repose of the senses."[1]

Saint Bonaventure, the most didactic of the mystics, enumerates sometimes four,[2] sometimes six,[3] or even seven[4] stages of mystic knowledge, but through all changes of expression the thought runs thus: there is no knowledge except of the universal: but the universal *in re* (Nature) and the universal *post rem* (Thought) are only

[1] Œuvres de Saint-Victor, trad. par Hauréau, pp. 140, 141.
[2] De reductione artium ad Theologiam, Oper., t. vi.
[3] Itinerarium mentis ad Deum, cap. i.
[4] De septem gradibus contemplationis.

reflections of the universal *ante rem* (God), and the soul must not only exceed experience, but also every regular activity of the mind, in order to arrive at that which is. It must not only first traverse all that men call "thought," but it must take the leap over self [1] and over the world of sense as well. Following the example of other mystics, Saint Bonaventure calls this mystic identification of the spirit with the Absolute,[2] *synderesis*, but when he attempts to express something of it in comprehensible terms, his psychological descriptions contain nothing more positive than "the joy of being uplifted to a *super-intellectual* love," [3] greater even than Reason. The same author is indignant at the mention of laws which scholars claim to have observed which would hold thought in fixed, irrefragable conditions, and his reasoning is as follows: "Since nothing except God can satisfy, there ought to be nothing to hold me back in my progress towards God." [4]

We have in the writings of Saint Theresa a third testimony to the mystic experience, and one which at least has the merit of absolute naïveté. The following extracts are taken from the description of the various degrees of Prayer: "Those who begin to pray may be compared to persons who draw water from a well with great pains. . . . They have to with-

[1] Stimulatio amoris, 2 pars, ch. vii.

[2] Itinerarium mentis ad Deum, ch. i.

[3] "Extasis est, deserto exteriore homine, sui ipsius suprà se voluptuosa "quædam elevatio ad *super-intellectualem* divini amoris fontem." (*De septem gradibus contemplationis.*)

[4] "Tollant ergo phantasias suas quibus lumen mentium nostrarum obtenebrare nituntur neque nobis Deum nostrum simulacris æstimationum suarum intersepiant, quia nos *sicut nec satiare potest aliquid præter ipsum sic nec sistere potest aliquid* usque ad ipsum." (In. III. Sententiar., dist. xvi., q. 3.)

draw into solitude that they may see nothing and hear nothing. . . . And with all this pains nothing but dryness and distaste will be found for several days. . . . The second way is the prayer of quiet. . . . In that, both the understanding and the memory contribute towards rendering the will capable of enjoying God; but it often happens that they hamper the will instead of helping it, and then it must not consider them, for in trying to recall them from their wanderings the will goes astray with them. . . . The understanding and the memory are like pigeons who, not content with the grain given them at home, go abroad in search of more, . . . and then return to the dovecote, but finding none there, sally forth again. So do these two faculties act, in the hope that the Will may give them some share in the favors it receives from God. They imagine, no doubt, that they can be of service to the Will by representing to it the happiness it enjoys, but it often happens, on the contrary, that they do harm. . . . The third kind of prayer is like a sleep of the three powers. In that state the soul no longer knows what it is doing, . . . whether it speaks or is silent: it is a blissful extravagance, a happy folly. . . . I have often been carried away by it. I could see quite well that it was God, but could not understand in what manner He was then acting in me.[1] The fourth way in which the soul finds the water with which to sprinkle this spiritual garden resembles

[1] In this we see the real inner process of Mysticism: the Will aspiring to the Absolute, struggling against the empirical consciousness at the same time that it is taking support from it symbolically, seeking even to do without symbols and reaching, at last, a state of unconsciousness in which nothing subsists but Desire coupled with an assurance of moral purity which is equivalent to the possession of the Absolute.

an abundant rain: . . . there is such perfection of joy that soul and body cannot express it: . . . if they could the perfect union of all the powers would be at an end. . . . I do not well know what is spirit, nor what the difference may be between spirit and soul: it seems to me one and the same thing, although sometimes it appears to me that the soul goes out of itself in the way that a flame goes out of a fire, and rises impetuously above itself: we cannot say that there are two different bodies, for the fire and the flame are one. . . . All that I claim to show by this is that what the soul feels in this divine union makes into one two things which before were separate and distinct. Hardly an instant passes before one of these powers awakens from this state. The will is the power that maintains itself the longest. — There are certain authors who specially recommend the strict contemplation of divinity only, with no presentation of anything corporeal to the imagination. . . . I acknowledge that I cannot understand what they are thinking of to say that we ought to turn our eyes away from all corporeal objects as though we were angels. . . . There are persons whose understanding is of such a nature that this would render them incapable of meditating. And this in my opinion comes from the fact that, the purpose of meditation being to seek for God, as soon as the soul has found him, it tries to accustom itself to seek him thereafter through the will only, which, being the most generous of all the powers, tries to do without the understanding, through its own great love for God. This it cannot do, however, until it reaches the very last stages, because it has frequent need of the understanding to

kindle it.[1] I do not pretend to dispute these authors, . . . but had I stopped as they advise, and never changed, I should never have arrived at the place where it has pleased God to bring me, because in my opinion there is deception in all that." [2]

It has been our object to show, once for all, what mystics are able to do when they try for a method. If we examine the terms in which the mystic consciousness tries to state itself, we find everywhere two psychological elements which produce the state of rapture in which it delights. 1st: Images which have been intellectualized by prolonged attention and which have been freely invested with esthetic perfection under the action of intense Desire; 2d: The sentiment of a moral transcendence, expressed in ideas of a heavenly kingdom, absolute salvation, disinterestedness, etc. It is exactly what Pascal said "God known of the Heart." — Mysticism consists simply in an alliance of Freedom and the Imagination, and unless Freedom keeps rigidly within the Kantian sense of "practical Reason," aberration would be the outcome. But when Desire has the safeguard of evident morals, it may soar without going astray. Then it may happen, and secular history itself furnishes examples, that deeds and conceptions worthy to endure may spring, through the power of a good will, from a subject of intellectual mediocrity, or at least from one deprived of the light of science.

[1] It is hardly necessary to remark that the naïve author means by the word "understanding" the whole mental activity, and every association of images or of concepts.

[2] *Vie de Sainte Thérèse, écrite par elle-même*, ch. xxii. et suiv. *Le Château de l'áme*, passim.

## § IV. — PHILOSOPHICAL MYSTICISM AND RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM

I. Philosophical mysticism is merely a vague state of consciousness, having in it no moral transcendence.

II. There is nothing of a supernatural character in Mysticism, except that it brings the realizing sense of the Good to such a high point that a power is developed to effect in the consciousness the synthesis of Determinism and Freedom.

III. Nature and the mystic Consciousness.

I. There is hardly anything in common between philosophical mysticism and the state which we are trying to describe. Examples of true mysticism properly claiming the appellation of "religious fact" are not to be found in any of the rational intuitions of God, beginning with the *Ecstasy* of Plotinus, all the way to Jacobi's *Revelations of the Heart.* The psychology of the "religious fact" is in short the object of our attention. It has manifested its greatest intensity in Christianity, and we are able to define it as follows: a tendency to arrive at consciousness of the Absolute by means of symbols under the influence of love. Less strongly marked forms of mysticism than the religious fact might all be included in the well-known definition: "Mysticism consists in according to Spontaneity a larger place in the intelligence than is granted to the other faculties."[1] How are we to distinguish this spontaneity of the intelligence from our other initiatives? Does it exceed reason, etc., etc.? These would be embarrassing questions, but fortunately, it is not mysticism of this kind which engages

Philosophical Mysticism is merely a vague state of consciousness, having in it no moral transcendence.

[1] Bouchitté, *Dict. des sciences philosophiques*, p. 189.

our attention. Victor Cousin, in his definition of mysticism, has not understood any better the true essence of the religious fact. He calls it "the claim of knowing God, without intermediary, and, as it were, face to face," and goes on to say, "in mysticism, everything that comes between God and ourselves hides him from us." [1] Then he draws a distinction between the mysticism of "feeling" and the mysticism of "reason." He considers the first as an initiative of the sensibility, a presentiment of the infinite which reacts upon the intelligence without allowing the intelligence to guide. Towards science, the mystic heart considers itself as innocence to virtue, an easier and surer way of access to the infinite. He is right, however, when he says that this is not to be trusted: "Mysticism rests chiefly on sentiment, and makes little of reason, . . . finally attacking Freedom, and prescribing self-renunciation in order to be identified through love with that from which infinity separates us." [2] The second form, the mysticism of Reason, has its type in the Alexandrian philosophy. "If, for a moment, Reason touches the summit of abstractions by the power of dialectics, mysticism breaks the ladder, as it were, which has enabled us to mount to the infinite essence," [3] and the mind is thrown into confusion when it essays to take direct hold of the essence.

The sanities of mysticism and the acquisitions we may expect it to bring to life being the object of our examination,

[1] Hist. de la philos. moderne, t. ii. ix. leçon.

[2] Hist. de la philos. moderne. — In the Third Part of this work will be seen what must be thought of the relations of the Absolute and Freedom.

[3] *Ibid.*

we need only pass by the inaccuracies which an ill-regulated sensibility and a philosophy, curious only, have too often produced. Here therefore, we give the direct and instructive testimony of a famous mystic, Saint Francis de Sales: "Philosophers themselves recognize certain kinds of natural ecstasy brought on by vehement application of the mind to high things. . . . The sign of a good and holy ecstasy is that the understanding has less part in it than the will, which it fills with a profound affection for God, full of warmth and emotion: but if the ecstasy is more beautiful than it is good, more enlightened than touched with emotion, more speculative than loving, it is subject to great doubt and suspicion."[1]

Having disposed of all the usurpations of mysticism which emotion and an over-bold Reason have occasioned, this definition seems to us the best: "*Mysticism is the tendency to draw near to the Absolute in moral union by symbolic means.*"

II. The "supernatural" idea is by no means the thing which distinguishes the religious fact from philosophic mysticism, or at least, we must define the word.

There is nothing of a supernatural character in Mysticism, except that it brings the realizing sense of the Good to such a high point that a power is developed to effect in the consciousness the synthesis of Determinism and Freedom.

It is just as grave an illusion to attribute morality to a stone as it is to think to find the supernatural in the world of phenomena. The Absolute is not to be found anywhere but in the consciousness, and it is present there only. It is true that theologians distinguish the *modus operandi* and the *modus essendi*, the latter applying to the presence of God in us by way of grace, but we do

[1] Saint François de Sales, *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, l. viii., ch. vi.

not know really any other divine activity affecting us than that which is welded with our own proper life, in accordance with the theological axiom *natura sequitur esse*. God can reign supernaturally only in Freedom and by Freedom itself: and furthermore the word "supernatural" can only signify transcendence of the same over the same, quite the opposite of any alteration. On the other side, however, the idea of the Absolute collapses of itself, if it is confined in the moral region of the consciousness; if it does not include the whole content of our minds, the idea perishes and God remains nothing more than a being of reason. Here, then, is exactly where Mysticism applies, — not to believe in the Absolute apart in Nature and in Freedom.

"Supernatural" is a word full of difficulties. A sound consciousness, whether mystic or scientific, must know instinctively that Determinism leaves no place for anything "new" in Nature. The source of our rational vigor is in the feeling that there is a stable harmony between the mind and things. But, at the same time and in equal measure, the consciousness perceives within itself that Duty and Freedom have a rule which is no less stable. These two aspects the consciousness fuses into one: it finds the necessity in its very Freedom as Reason and Duty, and then it carries its Freedom over to Nature. Nothing has been so unfortunate for Mysticism as the dualist doctrine of the Evil-Nature and the Supernatural Good, under any of its forms. We are in Nature, by essence and destiny, *nati;* and only in Nature is Good possible for us and appreciable by us.

The essential difference between Christian mysticism and

naturalism is, that in naturalism, Freedom retains no proper and distinct value, and that man is nothing therein but another bit of nature, just like the elements and the cosmic forces. The illusion by which the mind first gave itself to itself as transcending everything else is doomed to disappear with the advance of science, the naturalists say, and religion will be perfect when finally we are all convinced that there is just as much divinity in a stone as there is in a conscious free being, and that there is no more sacredness in thought, however wonderful it may appear, than in the flight of an insect or the fall of a leaf. According to the naturalist, the only standpoint, religious and scientific at once, from which we can make the conquest of the true and the good is that the soul is identical with all the other manifestations of vital and cosmic power. The place of Mysticism is between such naturalism and the contrary exaggerations of anthropomorphism, which considers all nature under a curse, after having first deprived it of all excellence and dignity, the exclusive essence of Spirit. We must guard against substantializing Nature and Freedom apart. Rather than separate Good and Being, and thus lean towards moral dualism, it would be far better to accept the following formula of positivism: "That the power which manifests itself in the consciousness is only a different form of the power which manifests itself outside the consciousness." [1]

It has not been difficult for the mystics least influenced

[1] The final result of speculation is . . . that the power which manifests itself in the material universe is the same power which in ourselves is manifested as consciousness. — SPENCER, *Rev. philos.*, t. xviii., p. 114.

by the artificialities of scholasticism to embrace in the same worship, as one God, that Power which determines phenomena and which also appears self-determined in us as Freedom. But it is impossible, without an act of mysticism, to actually make in one's self this synthesis of Determinism and Freedom; therein consists the mysticism. Kant believed that Reason would be endangered by such an attempt. But Fichte, coming after Kant, was led, through logic alone, to the very place where mysticism posits itself naïvely and at the outset; although he ended by causing the non-ego to disappear in a too subjective synthesis. Positivism proposes to leap over this and to treat the world and the consciousness as though they were not, even from the origin or in any way, distinct things. In this way Philosophy ceaselessly oscillates from one side to the other, never able to unite subject and object by the sole identity of the concept with the intelligence. That there is more consistency in the mystic consciousness for the synthesis of the world and the ego, we may say at once, is owing to the idea of Good, which makes a passage possible between the two terms. Determinism does not consist altogether in necessity, nor does Freedom consist altogether of contingency;[1] behind each of them there is an active and an already concrete essence which we are conscious of in ourselves as "Force" and "Desire." The mystic asserts that this essence, which appears to us

[1] "Contingency is the false appearance to our human ignorance of that surplus of intelligibility which is at the source of being and which transcends our perception." (Fouillée, *Rev. philos.* mai, 1875, p. 466.) So be it. The mystic has no ambition to clear up the Source of being. Only agree that it is the same for Nature and for Freedom, and that is all he asks.

as both necessary and undetermined, is not different in Nature from that which it is in his own consciousness, and he believes himself able to grasp it by an act which is at once love and Reason, thought and will. The link which binds together the empirical consciousness and the mystical consciousness is found in the idea, or rather in the feeling, of the Good. When this feeling reaches a certain height it passes the understanding, and calls upon the imagination for means of direct expression: and then it is that the consciousness is in the mystic state, and that symbols appear.

III. Is it as a consequence of all this that we find among mystics a very deep and naïve feeling for Nature? — A certain kind of Naturalism which has no pretension to be mystical has, indeed, been able to come into a poetical union with things, after its own fashion; but how far apart is such sophisticated and self-centred poetry from the spontaneous outpourings of such men as the author of the "Book of Job," or Francis of Assisi, when they speak of the soul, life, sorrow, or universal being.[1]

Nature and the Mystic Consciousness.

[1] We should be glad to cite several instances from the life of that purest of mystics, Saint Francis of Assisi, too naïve not to shrink from the thought of recording his visions for the public eye. We are able, however, to form some idea of this mystic personality and his most remarkable state of consciousness from a little book called "*Fioretti*" in which a contemporary has handed down some of his actions and discourses for the contemplation of the centuries. We need only to read the headings of the narrations in order to be convinced that such mystic actions are not to be confounded with anything expressly invented for the purpose of poetic communion with Nature: *How Saint Francis preached to the birds, and how the swallows were still when he spoke. Of Saint Francis's holy miracle in converting a ferocious wolf who was devastating the environs of Gubio*, etc. We see how very different it all is, when we have read Saint Francis' improvisation, the *Canticle of the Sun*, or the following exordium from one of his discourses: "*Dear birds, my little*

Faith identifies mind with its object in a way that artistic reflection can never do. When we reflect we find that we get the feelings of love, joy, being, from within, and then we picture them as belonging to all sorts of things: but in the mystic state, the consciousness and the world meet directly in a term which transcends them both, — in God, who at once contains them and carries the sense of their affinities to the highest point. It is this meeting of the inner life of the Spirit and the outer life which leaves behind every kind of esthetic effect. Without artificiality, without any abstract duplication of the ego, the mystic soul has direct experience of the presence of the Absolute in itself, through symbols. Then, as necessary consequence of the presence, it becomes almost as intensely aware as it is of itself, of the outer, which is no longer itself, but which, like itself, has communication with being and life, in the Absolute. In past times, such naïve actions have followed this state of experience that our outworn civilization is tempted to class them as aberrations.[1]

*brothers, you owe a great debt of gratitude to your Creator: it is he who has made you free. You can neither spin nor sew, and it is God who clothes you and your little ones. It must be, therefore, that your Creator has a great love for you — and you must do all in your power to give him in return the tribute of your praises.*" Whatever estimate any one may make of such words, it cannot be denied that they reflect a state of Soul which has no example in art or literature, and which nothing but mystic faith can show. (*Fioretti* — Abbé Riche, Paris: Bray et Retaux — p. 46.)

[1] We would call attention to an article on this subject in the Revue des Deux Mondes, by Mme. Arvède Barine, who has understood, it seems to us, better than any other, perhaps, this state of consciousness of which Saint Francis of Assisi is the most complete type. "Into his feelings for Nature, there entered," says the author, "a mingled admiration and tenderness for the universal life which produces both humanity and the blade of grass. He would stand in contemplation before a flower, an insect, or a bird, but the

It has been only the purest, the very flower of Christian mystics who have had this devout love of Nature: but we may nevertheless consider the complex sentiment which we define *a mental synthesis of Determinism and Freedom,* as a common feature of every form of Mysticism. — Nothing is easier than to trace in antiquity itself these two elements which together form the essence of the mystic fact. The mysticism of antiquity, before the religious conscience was animated by other sentiments than fear, appeared in the tragic form with which Æschylus and Sophocles clothed the marvels of their genius. First, we see Nature with its terrible forces and in its strange aspects; then, piercing through the apparent fatality of the events in which man is inevitably crushed, we feel, more than we see, the mysterious weaving of a web, the work of a Spirit, the logic of Justice. What is this but a synthesis of Determinism and Freedom, according to the antique? A conception of Determinism had not then been made, except in the not very scientific sense of "Fate;" and Freedom, which then had its synonym in "Justice," had not found its true signification in the human consciousness. It was not until later that Freedom reached the sense of Love, which has been the force of Christianity, — and which still gives it a savor which nothing approaches.

egoistic pleasure of a dilettante had no place in his gaze. He cared that the plant had its share of the Sun, that the bird had its nest, and that the very humblest of the manifestations of the creative force should possess in unconscious happiness everything to which it might aspire." (*Rev. des Deux Mondes,* Avril, 1891, t. v. p. 761.)

## § V. — MYSTIC PLEASURE

I. Ontological value of Finality. The naïveness of Art.

II. Scientific, esthetic and moral pleasure is the result of apprehension of the Absolute in its various relations with our consciousness.

III. The pleasure properly called "mystic" is the result of direct union with the Absolute through the power of Disinterestedness or love.

I. The "pleasure of the Reason" or "human pleasure," is the subject of esthetics, and as a thing this fact is of too great importance to the soul of a mystic for us to omit a thorough examination of its conditions.

Ontological value of Finality. The naïveness of Art.

It is impossible to deprive our feeling for the beautiful of its ontological character, nor can it be considered merely as the concordance of our concepts rigorously contained within the limits of the consciousness. Man's belief has been so invincible that the Beautiful springs from a harmony between Nature and himself that he has called the ensemble of all things *Mundus* from the subjective impressions of pleasure which things give us.[1]

This opinion has prevailed over that of the objectiveness of the world and the fatality of its causes. So we see that the finality, which has been said to be the fruit of our own concepts, has accompanied our most primitive perceptions. This ontological and objective conception of finality must be persistently maintained. Were it not in things, the world would no longer be a "system," but merely "a

[1] "Equidem et consensu gentium moveor." "Nam quem *Cosmos* Græci, nomine ornamenti appellavere, eum nos a perfectâ absolutâque elegantiâ *Mundum*." (Pliny, *Hist. nat.* i. ii. iii. 4.)

series" of facts, something the mind cannot admit even as an hypothesis.[1]

The deeper the mind penetrates into the facts of esthetics, the more they are perceived to be based upon an ideal identity between the mind itself and things. At a certain point the harmony becomes so complete and the finality so close that it gives us actual emotion. The Beautiful then becomes the sublime, and, for a passing flash, the soul rises into the true mystic state and touches the Absolute. It is scarcely possible to persist in this esthetic perception without feeling lifted up by it above things and above ourselves in an ontological vision which seems to be very much the same as the Absolute of the mystics. Empiricism has striven hard to bring the facts of this kind under the head of "adaptations" of self-interest appertaining to the elementary life. "These phenomena," says Maudsley, "witness to a reciprocal adaptation between organic being and the nature around it, whence it is derived and to which it returns."[2] No one can help feeling, however, that the word "adaptation" is not any clearer than the word "finality," and that, whether we use the one or the other, there is no escape from the sense of an overmastering power, which has borne in itself and possessed in common essence the mind and things. This original essence could not have been the Unconscious: it is equally impossible that it should be what we call our "consciousness," which is merely a power of assimilation and nothing more. It can only be the

[1] Cf. Lachelier, *Fondements de l'Induction*, pp. 48, 83.

[2] *Physiologie de l'Esprit*, p. 368, trad. par Alex. Herzen.

Absolute, the Uncreate, define it as each of us may, in his own fashion, if only by the positivist conclusion of "something which will never respond to any questionings of the consciousness, something which comes from very far off." [1]

The life of art, moreover, has a direct interest in such a conception of Esthetics. Art, emptied of its infinite object, would not have the faith to create, and would lapse into mere dilettantism. We could make ourselves naïve for a quarter of an hour, just long enough to amuse the mind with pictures, but there would be nothing to sustain and fructify genius. Unless we are willing to fall into ways which are the reverse of "liberal," we must not let Positivism clip our wings, but we must maintain, with deep and habitual simplicity of soul, the belief that the Ideal is the reflection of *something other*. "Serious art, whose possession can be had only at the price of devout effort, is more and more neglected every day. Artists of genius are not born because the times no longer need them." [2]

II. Kant saw very well that esthetics would have to find its definition in finality; but his critical method did not allow him to carry it out. We define as esthetic all pleasure arising from representations which are "disinterested," that is, from which the elements of self-interest have been eliminated. In the animal there is no esthetic: finality is not

Scientific, esthetic, and moral pleasure is the result of apprehension of the Absolute in its various relations with our Consciousness.

[1] Man cannot help feeling dimly, through these instincts of self, something of which no interrogation of self-consciousness will ever suffice to give an adequate account to him: something which cometh from afar. — MAUDSLEY, *id.* p. 368.

[2] Von Hartmann, *Philos. de l'Inconscient*, t. ii. p. 469.

free in a state below that of reasoning beings, but is confined to the practical interests of self-preservation. In us begin representations stripped of self-interest, that is to say, those in which Reason, the originator of relations of finality, seeks only itself and contemplates only itself.

Taking the word "disinterested" to mean all that does not actually tend to self-preservation, we see no reason not to include under one and the same definition every kind of higher pleasure, the esthetic, properly so-called, the scientific, and the moral.

In our opinion, scientific curiosity seeks out natural relations for the purpose of esthetic pleasure, when free from any intention of the useful, and merely *in so far as it has itself discovered or recognized them.* Were this not so, how could there be any "Scientific Ideal," the source, like every Ideal, of emotions and undefined desires? The pleasure of the artist and the pleasure of the scholar have a common basis, and for both it is religious. What is there at the bottom of all the conceptions of Spencer and others regarding the "Scientific Religion" of the future? Not as an "unknowable" could the Universal Being fill us with reverence and religious love, but rather in the aspect of the *indefinitely knowable* and as holding up before our Reason the marvellous hope that we may know Nature in her furthest depths, in ways as difficult for us to believe possible as our scientific conquests of to-day would have been to the men of former times. The scientific Infinite has its own prestige of superstition, and its own mysticism, just like any other Infinite. There is besides another most important remark upon this

subject. The artist and the scholar both feel that, infinitely varied as things are, they are nevertheless retained within the limits of their essence; now, this fact reveals the presence of a force which outside of ourselves we call "Necessity," but which within us is present otherwise. Necessity in its subjective form is "Order," a primal sentiment in us which would easily serve to effect the mutual communion of Esthetics, Science, and Religion.

The same variations, and even deeper ones than in Nature, are apparent in the realm of Freedom: but the marvellously changing forms of "character" are also dominated by an Ideal which demands the creation of a harmony, not less perfect than the harmony of Nature, between all our actions and all our desires. Order in this realm has the most intimate effect upon us, because we are not merely spectators of its production, but contributors towards it. Moral pleasure has the highest place, above that of science and esthetics: in it must be recognized the triumph of Finality. Morality, more personal to us than the pleasures of the intelligence and taste, brings to us "divine" joys only because it brings us nearer to the Good, in which we feel that all Ends meet and depend. Finality expires in pleasures of this kind: our Reason finds its term in them, and the character of moral satisfactions is such that we can rest in them definitely, so that neither fatigue nor ulterior desires can make us descend from them. It must be acknowledged, though, that while this pleasure is the most secure, it is also the least active. This is for the reason that we scarcely do more than touch it, while the other forms of

activity among which the sum of our pleasures is divided, the sensible life, science, art, etc., use up our time and the largest part of ourselves. Moral pleasure resembles what has been named for the body *euphoria*. It is an habitual state of well-being. It is sufficient not to sin, in order to feel it. It is of equal mood, and does not make itself noticed: but there are certain times, in moments when we are strongly moved to acts of goodness and morality, that we become more actively conscious of it: and then we experience that true pleasure of the gods, "Peace in Freedom." There is nothing worthy the name of "Happiness" like the infinite consciousness of that integral well-being, "the Peace which passeth all understanding." [1]

Saint Augustine, taking his inspiration from the Pythagorean notions of perfect unity, unites in the universal at one stroke the notion of "pleasure" and the notion of "finality." "Joy is the tendency to Unity, Sorrow is the division of the One. . . . Out of much material I construct a house. I am not better than a sparrow because I bring together more material, but because I am conscious of the Unity which I am producing. . . . My soul passes on from that to moral considerations; . . . it finds it a lamentable thing to compose verses or make music when life does not move in cadence and when itself is out of harmony, or productive of nothing but a shameful discord of vices. In this world of sense, it must be learned that if anything shocks us in the dispersion of time and space, it is because we fail to see the All to which each thing is

[1] Phil. iv. 7.

related. According to the words of the book of Wisdom[1] *'Wisdom shall show herself in joy and shall come before them with prudence;'* the uncreate wisdom shows us traces of itself even in the natural joys, and knows how, by corporeal forms, to bring us back to our own souls at some moment when we are just going to lose ourselves in the body. It makes us see that that which delights and attracts the sense is only in the *number* of things; it makes us look for the reason of them and brings us to ourselves by the thought that, unless we have within us the laws of the Ideal, we shall find nothing beautiful or ugly in matter. Free the mind of the human artist and turn your regard towards eternal Number. Wisdom will then be seen in her proper dwelling. Should this sight not touch your feeble gaze, turn it again upon the paths of the present life, where wisdom has already appeared to you with smiles, — recollect that here is the same wisdom only beginning; and renew your hold upon her here with more strength and more purity."[2]

III. Mystic pleasure may be considered the synthesis of all the higher pleasures so far as they contain any sense of the Absolute. There is, however, one effect, *sui generis*, for which it is proper to reserve chiefly the name "mystic pleasure." After we possess all that science and art can give us, even after we have put ourselves practically in harmony with universal being through morality, there is still something more. Science, art, and even duty leave us still far away

The pleasure properly called "mystic" is the result of direct union with the Absolute, through the power of Disinterestedness or love.

[1] Ch. xvii. [2] *De libero arbitrio*, c. xvi.

from that "moral unity with the absolute" called *Love,* and it still remains for us to effect a transformation of all these relations into a feeling of intimate relation to God. This is what mystic "pleasure" really consists in, and we shall learn, that very special conditions of imagination and will, which we must not fear to call an *alienation* in the etymological sense of the word, are required to effect this nearness.

In order to approach the absolute, mystics must withdraw from everything, even themselves. The sense of emptiness and death from this withdrawal from self, or moral alienation, when carried far enough, would be crushing were it not counterbalanced by a sense of ecstasy. The attractions of pure science, of glory, of human love, are replaced in the imagination and even in the senses by "something other." A sort of pleasure succeeds, so intimate, so penetrating, that it is preferable even to the joy of living. There is a strange experience of this kind related of the mystic of Assisi during his forty days extraordinary fast on Mount Alvernia, where he received the "stigmata." "Meanwhile the saint, feeling himself much weakened by his long abstinence and his struggles with the demon, perceived that he needed a spiritual nourishment to strengthen his soul. So he began to meditate on the infinite glory, the Happiness of the Blessed in eternal life, and he entreated God to grant him a foretaste of it. When suddenly, while he was still praying, there appeared to him, surrounded with splendor, an angel, with a viola in his left hand, and in his right a bow. Lost in wonder, Saint Francis gazed on the heavenly messenger, who drew his bow once across the viola, whence issued so suave

a melody that the soul of the Saint was ravished, as it were, and he seemed lifted above all bodily sensation. He said to his companions afterwards that had the angel drawn the bow once more across the strings, his soul would surely have broken its bonds and left the body."[1]

Ecstatic pleasure belongs to the most complex kind of facts which can be presented to the mind for study. Such a manifest example of mystic alienation as we have just read demands quite another treatment, but it was necessary to point out at least, in this preliminary examination of mysticism, to what degree the Absolute can take possession of the consciousness, and detaching it from all the other desires, can change so extraordinarily the very conditions of life itself. The pleasure which is found at the end of this series of mystic phenomena is experienced in a portion of man's nature which is no longer distinguishable. Reason and feeling seem confounded and fused into a unique expression, which leaves the soul either just ready to die or on the shores of a better life.

## § VI. — THE LIMITS OF MYSTICISM

I. Scientific Pessimism and mystic Optimism.
II. The sure and middle ground of Mysticism.

I. Mysticism rejoices with the most complete and admirable confidence in the spectacle of Nature, calling it a "*divine Poem.*" It has no hesitations in presence of the Absolute, and would, like a spouse, come only with love and freedom to its embrace. Reason, which has had its age of criticism, and Science, made up of de-

Scientific Pessimism and mystic Optimism.

[1] Fioretti, p. 170.

liberations and virile patience, tend to produce a state of consciousness altogether the opposite. Shall the mystic consciousness be so cramped in its aspirations as to become deadened? Should we desire this to be so? In our opinion a harmony is possible.

No doubt we shall have to encounter scientific pessimism, which brings forward all the apparent cruelties, monstrosities, and contradictions of Nature, and undoes so cleverly the harmony which other minds exaggerate in their conception of things. This reaction often puts to rout the dogmatic optimism which would fain make "a science" out of the conventional and the beautiful, but which sees its conceptions falling day by day into the rank of pure chimeras, and has nothing to put in their place. But the mystic indulges in no optimism of this kind. He makes no claim to explain things with the ideal which he gets from his Freedom: all he does is to make it his moral rule and his esthetic satisfaction. The objectiveness which he attributes to the Absolute has nothing to fear from the slurs of pessimism. In details, the reality may come short in the requirements of order, and may be indeed a brutal contrast to the desires of perfection which the mystic soul bears within; yet all this cannot trouble him enough to shake his confidence. After all, to find an explanation of the reality is not that for which he cares; his desire is to dominate the reality, by uniting himself, in a union of freedom, to the Absolute, far above all the baseness of the world and the failures of life.

That which is not true in itself is not good for conduct,

it may be asserted; that the heart has no privileges over science, and therefore mysticism is wrong. But no, this cannot be. Every high and comprehensive intelligence knows that even for the work of cognizing, not everything has to be brought to the scientific form. We may analyze and separate in order to know, as much as we will; we can never escape from the conviction that the implicit still remains at the root of everything, and that in some universal unknown substratum, not only are all things plastic in their affinities to each other, but they meet with us also, in various ways, with our life, our tastes, our heart. Metaphysics itself will not penetrate into truth any further than science, unless it consents to be comprehensive of every relation by which the mind and things are so closely bound together. For practical, industrial science it may be good to oppose the term "scientific" and the term "subjective," and to labor to grasp the bald facts outside the ego; but man can never come to the knowledge of himself and expand in all directions by this method. If science lays claim to the title of "knowledge," it must be quick to bring back the Idea, the Life, the Ego, into the elements which analysis has reduced provisionally to the state of non-ego, and it must come to know them just as the vulgar do, with the whole soul.

The sure and middle ground of Mysticism.

II. In a mind where there is both science and judgment and where ideas are ruled by the Ideal, the mystic fact cannot fail of accomplishment. But if a man lack both, he can supply the defect by becoming a mystic, upon one condition however, that he goes nowhere for

it except to the purest aspirations of the heart. Is not this what Goethe meant when he said, "The man who has science and art has Religion; the man who has neither, let him get Religion"? Too often in history have we had to remark the special absence of this comprehensiveness in mysticism. Once lodged in some corner of the Imagination or the Desire, according to the ideas of the time and the taste of each land, it has not been possible to make it see or love anything else. It gives itself over obstinately to that which it has taken for God without enough forethought, whatever the peril of dwarfing the life or wasting the soul.

Fetishism, Magic, Gnosis, Theurgy, Asceticism, Alchemy, Ritualism, etc., and still more recently, Spiritualism and Palladism, — a long list of the terrible degradations of mysticism, which weighs heavily on us now, just when we seem almost ready to come into touch with the broad and integral life of spirit. May the list soon be closed!

Mysticism ought never to depart from the formula so admirably adapted to it by Aristotle, — *ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι*.[1]

Organic life, Knowledge, Esthetics, Morals make up altogether but one figure "man" — one and the same phase in the progress of the possible towards the Infinite. Since it is we who are that complex and middle term of Being, our whole perfection must consist in learning to know Being and to actualize it integrally in the individual and in the species. Man will never attain for himself to Unity, to Good unless he endeavors to harmonize all his acts, to bring all his qualities into equilibrium. Most of our practical or specula-

[1] To play the man.

tive errors come from the preponderance of some one idea or one desire, which has taken hold in the consciousness, of an activity which should have been divided up and put to use there and elsewhere. Mysticism has oftenest been the preponderance of the spiritual activity; and has misled the intelligence from that side, and even has injured the moral character. We are bound up with the ensemble of natural causes by organic life: we must not seek to depart from them to learn more, nor must we separate our conduct from that of the things which together with us form one system. We have, it is true, a singular autonomy in Freedom which calls us to special destinies: but in order not to exaggerate our sense of these destinies, we must remember that an atom can prevent our mind from fulfilling its highest functions, and that gross stimulants often produce effects which we consider pure and delicate.

A few grains of coffee have the power of stimulating the Reason, giving spur to eloquence, and perhaps of increasing Freedom.

Up to this point we have defined, as far as lies in our power, the object of the mystic consciousness as the "Unknowable." By thus naming it we have put ourselves on the side of agnosticism, and the agreement is not only in name. No one can "know" the Absolute, and for this reason it might have been better to call mysticism an "experience" instead of a "knowledge." But what kind of experience is it? Not an experience through the senses, and not through pure Reason. The truest expression we can use seems to be Pascal's phrase, "God known of the Heart."

It is quite true that it is by means of the sensibility (senses and imagination) that we are conscious of the Absolute; yet it is a use of the sensibility unlike all others. This we shall call *mental symbolism:* and we shall see that, although the "heart" does not furnish images distinct from those of common experience, it has some intuition properly so called. The word "heart" will serve us exactly to designate the share that Freedom has in the mystic experience.

# SECOND PART

## SYMBOLS

The facts which the mystic consciousness claims as its own, bear all together the name of Inspiration. Now, if we can succeed in giving some precision to the idea "Inspiration," which participates in the indetermination of Freedom itself, we shall find the only intellectual thing in mysticism to be the analogical representations of the Absolute. Therefore the only thing that remains to be explained is the presence, in the mystical consciousness, of the symbols.

# CHAPTER FIRST

## CONCERNING INSPIRATION

### § I. — STATE OF THE QUESTION

I. Reason alone is *à priori:* Inspiration is only a fact to be verified *à posteriori.*
II. Autonomy of the mystical consciousness.
III. Mystic Esotericism.
IV. Inspiration is merely an intensified state of consciousness.

I. Inspiration is a fact which requires, in order to give a critical notion of it, to be treated as object outside the consciousness of rationalist, believer, or positivist. Every one agrees, from this point of view, that *à priori* there is no such thing as Inspiration. Just as truly as that a greyhound cannot leap over his own shadow, Reason cannot find support outside herself to extend her intuitions. We have no authority to expect increase of knowledge by any other ways than mental evolution, individual or general. This is not a denial of Inspiration, but if we wish to preserve this idea from interminable confusion, we must not distinguish it at all *essentially* from the Reason of which we are humanly conscious: it would not be any more logical to do so than to try to prove miracles *à priori.*

Reason alone is *à priori:* Inspiration is only a fact to be verified *à posteriori.*

Thus mystic facts, like all other facts, can only be "proved" according to the rules of criticism, rational or

historical. There are books whose intellectual transcendence we simply have to *postulate*, or actions whose morality could not be explained by mere effort of the human will alone. This is all we can look for under the words "Inspiration" and "Grace."

We shall soon discover that inspired Reason and inspiring Reason are not to be found in a relation of simple contact, but that their reciprocal inwardness must reach an actual identity. The mystic fact, it is true, consists in an "alienation" of the highest interest, we must allow, but the word does not concern, either immediately or remotely, Reason as a perfect whole, its identity being never more apparent than in the acts or phenomena under our consideration.

II. "Faith," in the ordinary sense of "acceptance of the mind of others," is entirely foreign to our subject. Any interest which Mysticism may inspire is because it asserts itself as a pre-eminently original state of consciousness; without derogation to all that bears the most respected name of authority, it offers itself to us as a condition of mind and heart of the most perfect independence. The word "authority," besides, has its derivation in *auctor*, which signifies an augmentation. In the sense of "repressing the intellect" or "inhibiting thought" there is no such thing as authority. As regards the intelligence, authority consists only in promoting a sane curiosity and in securing fresh evidence. It is merely a power of suggestion. The social state implies means of protection, of solidarity, of stimulus to progress of all kinds intrusted to the hands of one or many; but the creative initiatives, Life, Genius,

Autonomy of the mystical consciousness.

Holiness, are declared of themselves, and receive their laws in the Absolute only, where by nature they belong. Nothing is so apparent throughout History as this autonomy of First Principles in the conscience where they are incarnate, and nothing shows more clearly how altogether relative is the acceptation of the word "authority."

Mystic activity is found to be included in the universal activity, and in the expansive impulse of the Absolute (which is but the synthesis of first principles) forever going forth to manifest itself in Life, in Reason, and in Freedom. Every positive acquisition made in any order of facts whatever, comes from the eternal principles where things are true and good in essence, before manifesting themselves as such in Time. According to Pascal we really owe the reverence of antiquity to these new things when they have been sufficiently tried, and not to the opinions, however ancient they may be, which have taken their place.[1]

III. Mystical books, in so far as they make an effect upon us that is special and appreciable to the consciousness, fall properly under the domain of Criticism, like every other experience and psychological fact. But there is one reservation permissible, which is, that less than any other class of works do they belong to every one. Science, Art, pure Philosophy, all have their esotericism, and probably no mind has ever existed so comprehensive as not to find itself unfamiliar in some region of the knowable. In the immense region of the things of the soul, how could there be an esotericism more intimate and more reserved

Mystic Esotericism.

[1] *Fragment d'un Traité sur le vide :* éd. class. de E. Havet, p. 597.

than the mystic? To arrive at this state of consciousness, which has given to certain men power for such distinction among all others in character and in life, requires an assemblage of mental and moral conditions more rare than Genius itself.

Whatever any one may think about Mysticism, it must be acknowledged that it exists. It is vain to argue "that nothing is more subjective," for, though the objection is true, it does not alter the fact, if, even, it does not heighten its value.[1] The mystic sense is nearest to the soul, no doubt, and makes less demand for expression in words than the poetic faculty and other special tendencies of the mind; and though we shall see that terrible abuses may lurk behind this subjectivity, we must not think that all criterion is lacking. And without a really profound and critical examination no one has a right to judge.

Moreover, has Mysticism no place in other consciences but those which seem exclusively devoted to it? Perhaps there is no tendency which has so wide a psychological dominion over the whole world. Mysticism has its adepts everywhere. Besides actual mystics, how many others are there who carry into Art, Literature, and even into Science itself that pursuit of the Infinite which constitutes a fact as human, as universal, as Reason itself? Much less than this would be enough to justify our researches, and to prove that there is a middle

[1] Let a man read a chapter of Isaiah, whatever opinion he may have of it from a purely intellectual point of view, he cannot fail, if he have any harmony of soul in him, to be stirred to a high emotional tone by its lofty strain of feeling and grandeur of conception. — MAUDSLEY, *Physiologie de l'Esprit*, trad. par Herzen, p. 341.

place for truth between the negations *à priori* of naturalism, and a mystic intemperance which would make all things divine.

IV. It would be too bold perhaps to lay down positive rules of mystic judgment. Who can say when the mental energy begins to transcend the natural powers of the mind? What critical signs can be given of the rational transcendence of works which are called inspired? On this question we take a ground opposed to that of the vague and isolated mystics who have leaned towards occultism. The transcendency of Genius has been shown to consist in the union of the two apparently contrary characteristics of "originality in universality." There is no other transcendence that can be claimed for mystical books. From this point of view, the best part of mystical books, and the most manifestly inspired, is by no means the part which has produced opinions and sects, that is to say, not that which has been most pleasing to certain minds of specially similar tastes or interests; but it has been rather all the pages whose religious esotericism accords with the best wills and best judgments of all countries and all times. When the barriers of sects have once fallen, there is nothing left but that *Philosophia perennis*, which, in its various degrees, is the true, sole, and divine Revelation. The reason why mystic books have outlasted all others is because they show to man things in himself which he does not know about, and because they have helped him more than any other books to gain knowledge of these things.

Inspiration is merely an intensified state of consciousness.

"The word of God," says Saint Paul, "is quick and

powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and body." [1] Under ordinary conditions, man has only the process of artificial duplication, which we call "reflection" whereby to learn himself. But let us suppose for one moment a Consciousness which has engendered ours, and which knows it as a workman knows his works, each of whose elements he has counted and whose essential combinations he has thought out. By an application, not figurative but real, to this consciousness, the archetype of our own, the Inspired one would know himself "eminently" according to the word which Theology applies to God himself; he would perceive all details of his structural being alive and spiritual; he would know how to compare them and how to bring unity into that multitude of actions and reactions which form themselves between the world and us, and which are translated, in the empirical state, into such distinct facts as "ideas," "pleasures," "needs," etc.; he would have an active sense of all the possibilities of Freedom, and at last understand for himself that Good which our love can never exhaust, and which gives indefinite hope to our desires. Let us call it "Inspiration," "Faith," "Suggestion," etc.; if such a thing is possible, if the consciousness is able to reach such an alienation, and to lay hold of itself and things in such a representative act, there is no higher psychological hypothesis that can be made.

[1] Heb. iv. 12.

## § II. — IDENTITY OF REASON AND INSPIRATION

I. Continuous progress of Reason: Common-Sense, Genius, Prophecy.
II. Concerning Poetic Inspiration.
III. The aberrations of Mysticism in search of its own transcendence.
IV. Reason can be determined by nothing but itself; Unity is its act.
V. Inspiration communicates with Reason through evidence.

I. However it may be as to the autonomy of the mystic consciousness, there is nevertheless a governing principle for every sort of intellectual privilege, namely, "that the various orders of knowing must agree the one with the other." That there should be any real opposition between Common-Sense, Genius, and even Inspiration itself, cannot be admitted. Whether the thought is ordinary or so deeply reflective as to reach the mystical, it is always the same spirit, capable on its highest side of touching the secrets of the Absolute, if you will, but the law of whose life is to be constant to itself, and not, under any pretext, to shake off its own principles.

Continuous progress of Reason: Common-Sense, Genius, Prophecy.

The mind is one; in it alone is Unity, and not in things. From the humblest suggestions of Common-Sense to Ecstasy itself, all the way is only a progressive manifestation of the same essence: always the "same" adding itself "to the same."

Common-Sense is Reason applying itself to purposes of existence. Nevertheless, among all the attributes of Common-Sense there is none more important than that of foreseeing infinite possibilities of thinking and feeling "some

other thing" above and beyond itself and its humble practical functions.

On another side, Science, Poetry, etc., are joined to the ordinary state of consciousness without derogating from the identity of Reason, which, *cæteris paribus,* renders all intelligible to all. All men cannot comprehend each other, yet the barriers which divide us intellectually are only *empirical* and might be made to disappear by training.

We will venture this paradox (under promise of returning to it later in the course of this work), that if we have among us *types* of mental evolution or of forms of genius, we must look for their origin in that part of man which appears to us as Indetermination itself, namely, in Freedom.

II. Of all the kinds of mental activity which exceed Common-Sense, none offers greater psychological interest than the one we call Poetry.

Concerning Poetic Inspiration.

Poetic genius has more than mere relations of resemblance to Inspiration. If the "Vates" declares that it also is "full of God" it is because poetic toil, more than any other purely intellectual effort, lifts the whole soul, and puts the Reason to work with the Imagination. Poetry also loves and seeks the Absolute, not for its moral sustenance like Religion, but to embody reflections of the Infinite and to bring more intense life into its Works. It too has "to be inspired," that is, to go out from phenomena and to get into the first cause, although in a manner different from that of the philosopher or the mystic. The Poet has no more than touched the Absolute in thought when, without penetrating the least further, he hastens back to the world of Time; but

his imagination returns thence so heightened that he sees the universe and the soul, under the glowing colors which reality could never inspire. Taine quotes the opinion of Flaubert the novelist, showing how nearly the Poetic Inspiration can approach certain moments of mystic self-abandonment which we shall shortly consider. "In hallucination properly so called there is always something of terror: you feel that your personality escapes you, you think that you are dying. In the poetic vision, on the contrary, there is always a joy: something enters in and takes possession of you. *But in both it is equally true that you are no longer conscious where you are.*"[1]

Poetic activity cannot endure — it is soon over, exhausted by the effort to represent both the Infinite and the actual. Yet that state of consciousness contains information for us which we must consider and remember; the "vates" also has access to the spirit which possesses prophets, and through that access becomes Poet, that is, "Creator." Still, the differences between the two states remain essential, and the first and chief is that the poet makes poetry, nothing more. But the Mystic goes in search of the Absolute to obtain life.[2]

Mysticism begins with fear — fear of some universal, invincible ruling power, and becomes later a desire for union

[1] *De l'Intelligence*, t. ii., p. 60.

[2] The psychological resemblances of Poetry and Mysticism are very close, and that which separates them, perhaps all that separates them, is faith. The poet is far from identifying himself with his creations as the mystic identifies himself with his symbols. We may add that both states of consciousness are found together in the case of the greatest mystics. Francis of Assisi loved nothing so much as the songs of the troubadours, and Theresa of Avila was absorbed in the romances of Spanish chivalry, before either of them had entered upon the contemplative life.

with that which so rules it.[1] When full-grown, the mystic consciousness comprehends that its only point of contact with the Infinite is in its Freedom, and it ceases all attempt to advance on any other side. Love, in the sense of Goodness, Morality, Duty, takes precedence of all else, and strives to enlist all the rest of man, his senses, his intelligence, and all, towards its ends. Love aspires to God, and whatever soul is moved by Love, be it poor in gifts or powerful, it does not abdicate its original rights. Not to pure reason, nor even to the illuminations of Genius, does Love attribute its discoveries, but only to itself. In the Infinite the "Heart" alone can find sure and firm access, by some mystical co-operation of Imagination and Freedom, which, to say the least, would be of the greatest interest to learn.

III. Inspiration must not be considered as an experience outside of Reason and quite distinct from our real life. The most dangerous and lasting of all the aberrations of mysticism arose from yielding to the inordinate desire to establish the fact of some conscious activity *other* than Reason imparted by God to the elect only.

The aberrations of Mysticism in search of its own transcendence.

The ancient Gnosis, many of whose elements have been assimilated by Christianity, is one of the first examples of the confusion which ensues when an attempt is made to create distinct faculties in order to pass from the ordinary state of consciousness to the knowledge of the Absolute.

[1] There is an excellent chapter on this subject by M. A. Réville in *les Prolégomènes à l'Histoire des Religions.*

The Gnosis of the Valentinians in Egypt mentions three principles, "body," "soul," "spirit," as distinctly realized in men, whom they seem thus to divide into three species, not reducible among themselves.[1] Such men as possess the "spirit," that is to say, Inspiration, are vowed to "Gnosis," to Perfection. Those who have merely the "soul" are suited for "political life," and possessing an average Reason, they can neither raise themselves to Gnosis nor be lost in matter. The third species seems to have nothing to distinguish it greatly from pure animality.

Not to mention Manichæan dualism, which has repeated itself in religious history so often under so many forms, it is much to be regretted that many mystics, even such refined and discriminating ones as the Victorins of the twelfth century, and so many other orthodox writers, should have yielded to the same tendency, which is only restrictive of pure Reason to no purpose.[2] In their best moments these good minds understood, contrary to the traditions of the times, that thoughts of all kinds can have but one formal cause, namely, the Word, Reason, Intellect, whatever it is called: but, individually, they were not strong enough to grasp the whole truth at one blow.

We find, therefore, in more than one of Saint Augustine's books, traces of great hesitation when he is about to pro-

[1] *Essai sur le Gnosticisme Égyptien*, par É. Amélineau.

[2] For example, such terms as the following must be condemned: "When the soul is wholly withdrawn into its innermost place, Reason is doomed to silence. The Reason of the soul sleeps because, ignorant of the cause of such happiness, it is not capable of conceiving its origin, its present reality, and its purpose." (Hugues de Saint-Victor, trad. par Hauréau, pp. 135–142.)

nounce upon the true principles of Inspiration. Once he goes so far as to assert, showing that his mind was confused, that the Holy Spirit and the Genius of evil could exist in the Reason of the same man. "The prediction of things to be fulfilled after the expiration of long periods of time, examples of which we meet in profane writings, has been called *Divination*. Perhaps the Genii, Powers of the air, have seen from afar the things which they declared. Perhaps the Holy Angels, to whom God shows his Word, and in whom the past and future co-exist, have imparted their knowledge of things to men. *Perhaps some of them have received from the Holy Spirit enough natural elevation of soul to enable them to perceive direct, without angelic mediation, the causality of future things, as they are written down in the bosom of the universe.* For the powers of the air understand these mysteries supernaturally or not, according as He who has all things under Him judges best. But they were not worthy of the prophetic revelation (*per sanctos angelos*) which takes place either by means of the outer senses, or by *images impressed on the memory.*"[1] We desired to give an example of the confusion into which the Reason of the best of men is thrown when it fails to conceive its own essential unity. The last words of the text, however, bring out the true notion of the mystic fact which we desire to exhibit. In the intellectual life there are but variations of intensity, which do

[1] *De Trinitate*, l. iv. c. xvii.: *Oper.* t. iii., p. 116, ed. Paris, 1586. To the mind of Saint Augustine the distinction *per sanctos angelos* does not change the substance of the revelation; it is only the mode of transmission that is changed.

not in any way change the human and universal Reason. The transcendence which mystics call "Prophecy," "Inspiration," and so forth, only augments the intellectual power, as much as you will, but always identically, according to the principles which are its life and law. What is it that distinguishes one intelligence from another if it is not *its power of representation alone*, the way more or less felicitous in which each consciousness brings face to face the objects on which the Judgment must be exercised? Great mystics, like great geniuses, have always been extraordinary through power of Imagination. If we may say that it is the Reason itself which is exalted to the state of Inspiration, there appears to us to be only one criterion; one in fact most difficult of application, and it is the one which would serve (were such a thing possible) to make the moral distinction of characters. The standard of moral requirements may vary for every conscience; there are certain desires of Progress which the whole world does not experience, and it is on this side that reason can exceed herself. The Absolute is present only in the Infinite; but in us all is "finite," except Freedom.

IV. There must be no attempt to divorce Inspiration and Reason. It would be better for man to remain without that intellectual and moral addition which mystics seek in the Absolute, better for him to go on working, as best he can with the innate means at his disposal, for the extension of his knowledge and his morals, than to risk the consequences of an imaginary Inspiration which did not have the impregnable criterion of

Reason can be determined by nothing but itself: Unity is its act.

Evidence and Identity. Reason, like Life, is only susceptible of inner augmentation by effects immanent to their proper cause; both go on always in the same line, and what we call "progress," is nothing but the development of Identity. The *alteration* of life is death, the *alteration* of Reason is madness. Mystic alienation, as we shall learn, has no characteristics which contradict this rational notion of Progress.

An hypothesis in which Reason is not self-determined cannot be made, not even for the definition of Inspiration. Reason has an absolutely uniform development, and can only grow in fulness, that is to say, as it draws more intuitions or ideas into its immutable Unity. Progress, for it, consists in "comprehending" more things, and constantly covering *other portions* of the knowable, while within itself there is no "same," no "other," but only Unity. In its progress, Reason does not move: it is things which, as images or ideas, are forever moving out of confusion and division into unity. By constant renewal of its own proper act, Reason does nothing but dominate more and more all that is not itself, without mingling anything of itself or suffering any change. The "diverse" aspires to return to the "same," the "manifold" to the "one," and this aspiration for unity, which seems to exist as much outside of us as in us, becomes *our* Reason so far as we are conscious of it. But is it by becoming conscious of this unity of the world that we absorb it into ourselves? Has it not existed without us and before we were? The primordial unity of things both formal and creative is the true Reason of which we bear some reflections in our con-

sciousness. Could we succeed completely in reducing the diverse to the One, and fixing it there firmly, we should attain the Absolute, and we should be, like God, act pure.

There is therefore but one and the same Reason, whether we call it "natural" or "divine." In what, then, does this substantial identity consist if not in the criterion which we use for the purpose of admitting into the mind knowledge of all kinds, innate or acquired, natural or mystical?

We do not mean to say by this that all the knowledge not to be brought within the proportions of common-sense must be sacrificed, nor that all esotericism must be condemned. We do not arrive at truth intuitively by one single act, but by a consensus of efforts or acts of many kinds, which each of us is more or less capable of making. That this consensus of the whole soul is most felicitously accomplished in the mystic consciousness, we are permitted to believe; and he who believes it cannot fail to recognize in Mysticism the most subjective of our experiences and also the most beautiful. But, at least, let us take the greatest care not to confound this esotericism, so pure of all passion, with that subtle self-will called "Fanaticism."

V. At each step Reason lives by Evidence. Where evidence is lacking there is nothing to put in its place. The moral energies of Faith have nothing in common with the abuses of Occultism.

Inspiration communicates with Reason through evidence.

## § III. — CONCERNING THE INTELLECTUAL TRANSCENDENCE CALLED INSPIRATION

I. Inspiration according to Saint Paul.
II. Theological obscurity regarding the nature of Inspiration.
III. Unanimous sentiment which attributes Inspiration to a moral transcendence followed by illumination of the Imagination.
IV. Mental mechanism of Inspiration.

I. It would be interesting to gather the notion of Inspiration from the consciousness of Prophets themselves, or from the nearest possible point. The following, therefore, is a text from Saint Paul on the subject: Inspiration according to Saint Paul. "God hath revealed them unto us by the Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of the Absolute. What man knoweth the things of a man save through identity of consciousness with him? Even so of the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the Spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God. Spiritual things we say only to spiritual souls. . . . Man in his natural state receiveth not the things of the spirit of God. . . . The Spiritual man is able to judge all things." (1 Cor. ii. 10–15.) We need look no further for the moment of transcendence when the spirit begins to call itself "divine." It is enough for us that at this point there is nothing but *augment,* and not a change from "the same" to "the other." Indeed, if this text says anything, it says plainly that the Inspiration takes place through the consciousness or by *assimilation,* and that the Absolute gives intimation of himself as *the same* to the same, in like manner, the author expressly says, as if in the

empirical order two men could meet in a common consciousness. The terms "spiritual man" and "natural man" used by Saint Paul do not at all intend to convey that there is any mystic power of intuition distinct from the spirit itself. This mental affinity with the Absolute, which not every one is aware of, is not constitutive in its nature. We must look to Freedom to find its principles. If any man soever will search his own heart, he will always find there secrets of the transcendence which enable us to pass from the state of nature to God.

II. Unfortunately it is impossible to find in the Christian Fathers a satisfactory theory of Inspiration; none of their theories have sufficient breadth and unity to give us philosophical satisfaction. Upon this question exegetical reasonings have interfered with the intelligence of such minds as Saint Augustine's and Saint Thomas's, of which we may soon convince ourselves.

Theological obscurity regarding the nature of Inspiration.

If we go to the "Summa Theologica" for enlightenment upon the mental mechanism of prophecy, how far do we seem from the perfect continuity so admirable in the Aristotelian thought carried out by Albertus Magnus and Saint Thomas. We meet here an ill-defined Inspiration scattered all along the whole field of Knowledge; the naturalistic genius of Solomon being taken to be as much a part of it as the most marvellous of revelations.[1] Sometimes Prophecy is represented as a perfectly conscious act, and again as an

[1] *Summa Theol.*, ii$^{a}$ ii$^{ae}$. Q. clxxi., a. iii. corp. a. "Secundus gradus Prophetiæ est cum aliquis ex interiori lumine illustratur ad cognoscendum aliqua quæ tamen *non excedunt limites naturalis cognitionis: sicut dicitur de Salomone,* etc." (*Ib.* q. clxxiv. a. ii. ad. 3$^{um}$ et a. iii., corp.)

unconscious fact.[1] But especially are the essential laws of intelligence openly violated. We are told, for example, that the intellectual act has been sometimes divided among several consciousnesses, one having received from one side the "species" or images intended for the Revelation, while the work of intellection was reserved for another.[2] We are also told that there are cases in which the general notions (called by Saint Thomas *intelligible species*) divinely presented to the mind are not abstracted from anything, not even from the most secret pictures of the memory.[3] As if it could be admitted that God had created abstractions, or caused light to shine with no object to shine upon! It was in order not to disturb received interpretations of such matters that the author was guilty of contradictions. But

[1] "Prophetia primo et principaliter consistit in cognitione." (Q. clxxi., a. i., corp. a.) "Alio modo mens Prophetæ instruitur per instinctum quemdam occultissimum quem *nescientes humanæ mentes patiuntur.*" (*Ib.* a. v, corp. a.)

[2] "Per donum prophetiæ confertur aliquid humanæ menti suprà id quod pertinet ad naturalem facultatem quantùm ad utrumque, scilicet, et quantùm ad judicium per influxum luminis intellectualis et quantùm ad acceptionem seu representationem rerum, quæ fit per aliquas species. . . . Lumen autem intelligibile quandoque quidem imprimitur menti humanæ divinitùs ad judicandum *ea quæ ab aliis visa sunt.* . . . Sic igitur patet quod prophetica revelatio quandoque quidem fit per solam luminis influentiam: quandoque autem per species de novo impressas vel aliter ordinatas." (q. clxxiii., a. 2, corp. art.)

[3] "Prophetica revelatio fit . . . secundò secundùm immixtionem *intelligibilium* specierum . . . per hoc quod mens prophetæ illustratur intelligibile lumine aut *formatur intelligibilibus speciebus.*" (*Ib.* q. clxxiii., a. iii, corp. a.) Repræsentantur autem rerum similitudines divinitùs menti prophetæ quandòque quidem mediante sensu . . . quandòque autem per formas imaginarias . . . *sive etiam imprimendo species intelligibiles ipsi menti, sicut patent de his qui accipiunt scientiam vel sapientiam infusam sicut Salomon et Apostoli.* (*Ib.* a. 2, corp. a.) *Manifestum est autem quod manifestatio veritatis quæ fit per nudam contemplationem ipsius veritatis potior est quàm illa quæ fit sub similitudine corporalium rerum.*" (Q. clxxiv., a. 2, corp. a.)

it is only necessary to consult the Theological Christianity of the first ages, or merely certain books of Saint Augustine's, to ascertain how very slight a basis the reasonings rested on for the notion of Inspiration, already traditional in the fifth century.[1] They were trying to apply a method of literal criticism to those mystical narratives whose soul of profound and eternal truth lay concealed under the naïvetés of the letter. They believed that by so doing things purely moral which appear only under the concentrated rays of the whole "conscience" could be reduced to a science, and they entered on paths without issue.

III. But, in order to avoid digression, the important fact to be remembered is that when Christian opinion can be disengaged from the subtilities of Exegesis, it accords entirely with *Le livre des Egarés*, and the *Traité theologico politico* of Spinoza, upon the nature of the prophetic act.[2] We may derive from them a sort of universal definition of Inspiration resting upon two points: 1st, the moral application of Reason to the

Unanimous sentiment which attributes Inspiration to a moral transcendence followed by illumination of the Imagination.

[1] It is specially well to read the interpretation of the Vision of Abraham by the oak of Mamre (Gen. xviii.). In the literal sense of the apparition there are three persons who several times become one, and again separate into three. We can well imagine how this must have confused Saint Augustine, and how much pains and trouble he would take to explain this passage in its literal sense. It would have been so simple could he have recognized in it a purely subjective and symbolical vision. (V. *Lib. contr. Maxim.*, i., vi., 2 *B. Oper.*, t. vi. p. 319, 320.)

[2] In this connection we cite the following passage from Spinoza: "Since the Prophets saw into divine revelations through their imagination, it would appear that their faculty of perception went far beyond the limits of the understanding; for, with words and images it is possible to form a much greater number of ideas than with the principles and notions upon which all our natural knowledge is founded." (*Traité théol. polit.*, p. 33.)

Absolute; 2d, the production of mystical symbols in the Imagination.

Every mystical fact worthy of attention is divisible into two elements, the one "imaginative," the other "rational," the second of which is anterior to the first, at least logically. "*The active Intellect flows direct only upon the rational faculty, and causes it to pass to Act; and through the rational faculty the efflux reaches the imaginative faculty. This is the true conception of Prophecy.*"[1] Had this principle been recognized, much serious confusion would have been spared concerning the objectivity of mystic phenomena such as voices, apparitions, and so forth, from which the best of Christian minds, among them Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas, have not been saved.

For the explanation of this "effusion" of the divine Intellect, which is the essential fact of Inspiration, Saint Thomas had no need to renounce his doctrine of natural Knowledge. He blames either Averroès or Avicenna for having placed the origin of our ideas, under various heads, in the divine Intelligence: but did he really believe the human intellect so sufficient of itself that the increate light, the Word, could remain completely foreign to our rational life? Taking at its minimum signification the words of Saint John: "*That is the true light of the Word which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,*" our Christian Doctor might easily deny that human reason needs any transcendence when applied naturally to its own object, which is to know the world and itself; but he could never

[1] Maimonide, *Livre des Egarés*, trad. de Munk ii^e p., ch. xxxvii. p. 298.

have succeeded in reducing the relations of our mind with God, *since such relations exist,* to anything less than affinities of origin. The increate Light would necessarily remain distinct from all that is not properly thought, that is, from all that is thought by means of "species:" either in some manner we do touch it at an extreme point of our individual existence, or we ought not even to consider it, for it would have no existence so far as we are concerned.

Mental mechanism of Inspiration.

IV. There is in Philosophy a current of uninterrupted opinion in favor of the principle, which Averroès has established more clearly than any one else, of the "Transcendence of the intellectual power." The theories of the "active Intellect" (and of all Intellectualism in general), of Idealism, of Ontologism, etc., notwithstanding their original form, are only variations on the theme of Transcendence. In any one of these systems there is all the mysticism needed to explain Inspiration.

For acts of natural knowledge, the intelligible is at our disposition hidden away in things; we draw from its sources by a series of operations, which range all the way from sensation to the most general ideas. Mystic knowledge cannot relieve us from the necessity of abstracting the intelligible from some sensible substratum; otherwise there would be an absorption of our spirit in the divine nature. In fact only in God does the intelligible make but one with the intellect; in Him being and knowing are not distinguishable: but in us the knowing has *to be made;* that is to say, our intelligence, which pre-exists in a state of undefined possibility,

finds itself determined by objects to be known, — by "this" or "that." Mystic knowledge differs from experience by its conditions of *inwardness;* withdrawn from phenomena, it endeavors to bring the whole mental life within the soul. There, under the marvellous action of Desire (or Grace) our mind is written over with symbolical characters. The psychological law of intelligibility is not broken, but our intelligence reads in itself, and not in things, all that it brings back from its communings "with God."

Not merely pure Reason, nor the imagination by itself, but the whole of the mind is thus raised to the mystic state. However much the rational faculty may grow, alone it will never make an "Inspired" or a "Prophet" out of a scholar or a philosopher. The fact of Inspiration consists precisely in the *proportional* augmentation of the imaginative power and the Reason.[1] When the imaginative power dominates in an intellectual temperament, it may produce very good results for Knowing, even if combined with a Reason of moderate capacity; it would seem that such abundance of light succeeds in making clear to the consciousness the subtle details or the profounder depths imperceptible to a stronger Reason with less imagination. The mind of the thinker or scholar has juster vision, but the man of strong imagination sees things so much more vividly that he obtains a better intu-

[1] Learn that Prophecy is an emanation from God which flows, through the intermediary of the active Intellect, upon the rational Faculty first and then upon the imaginative Faculty; it is the highest degree of a man, and the term of perfection to which the species may aspire; and this state is the highest perfection of the imaginative Faculty. — MAIMONIDE, *Livre des Egarés*, ch. xxxvi.

ition of them, at least with regard to certain subjects which do not require too strict an attention nor a logical sequence too prolonged.[1]

Perhaps there is actual opposition between these two intellectual temperaments, and in fact they are seldom found together. This rare combination, and the plenitude of the mental life, find fulfilment in the mystic fact. Reason, directed towards the Absolute, not out of curiosity, but from purest desire, calls forth an emanation of the active Intellect. When we direct the attention towards things to grasp them scientifically, intellectual light comes to us slowly and painfully, but the emanation from the source itself is most like the wide effulgence of daylight; and the transports of Desire, through which the divine flood reaches us, spreading over the whole soul, the Imagination, as well as the Reason, becomes all activity; the whole consciousness is flooded with light to unknown depths, under the gaze of love from which nothing escapes. In this state, intensity of vision and sureness of judgment are equal; and the things which the "Seer" brings back with him when he returns to ordinary life are not merely partial impressions and the separate knowledge of "science" or "poetry," — they are truths which embrace the world, life, conduct, and in one word, *the whole consciousness*.

[1] "If the emanation flows into the imaginative Faculty only, and if the rational Faculty remains behind, either on account of original structure or from disuse, then is constituted the class of men called men of the State, diviners. There come to men of this class, even when they are awake, wonderful visions . . . similar to prophetic visions. . . . They delight much in them, believing that they have acquired all sciences without study." (*Livre des Egarés*, ch. xxxvii.)

It is plain, therefore, that the question of Inspiration cannot be put in these terms, "the mystic idea reaching the consciousness without passing through the side paths of abstraction;" for we should thus seem to forget that *in no case* does the idea cease to be "representative," that is to say, *wholly in images*. The mystic hypothesis opens a way for the access of God to our minds, not on the side of the senses, but at that rational summit where our consciousness tends towards him as it were. It is a *moral* emotion, which gives momentum to the whole mind; as a consequence of this fact (which we shall endeavor to condition as far as possible), the mystical conception begins with the phenomena of imagination, and, provided nothing intervenes to disturb or interrupt, it is completed by an act of powerful intellection.[1]

## § IV. — REASON AND THE DIVINE WORD

I. Identity of human Reason and the divine Word.
II. Mystical conditions of the consciousness of Christ.
III. The hypostatic Union and the "spiritual fact."
IV. The Personality.

I. In this study of the "Word incarnate," no encroachment of pure Reason on the domain of Theology is involved. Every one will agree that we are not overstepping our proper limits when they reflect with what eclectic freedom theological Christianity itself began by drawing from Greek philosophy, from mystical Eastern books,

Identity of human Reason and the divine Word.

[1] Cf. Saint Augustine, Epist. cxii. "*De videndo Deo;*" *Tract. de Genesi* ad litt., l. xii.; *Tract. de Trinitate*, l. iv. St. Th. Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, ii$^{a}$, ii$^{ae}$, q. clxxi-clxxiv.

from the Gnosis, and when they reflect that it owes it to these sources that it has taken form as a didactic matter, a "science." [1]

The notion of the "incarnate Word" may be compared with the notion of "Creation." The "passage from the Absolute to phenomena," or, inversely, "from phenomena to the Absolute," is almost the whole content of both the one and the other. The word "Creation" answers to the mystery of Force, and the supreme mystic fact, the Christ, answers to the mystery of Reason. The first would explain how from one came the manifold, and the second, how the manifold returns to one. Could we comprehend this reciprocal becoming, we should no longer need to seek for the origin of things nor for the origin of our mind. Being is divided in Time and developed in Space, but by an opposed act, Unity tends to repossess itself in the consciousness, and to triumph over the division and instability of phenomena; and perhaps all questions of origin, rational as well as theological, must be brought back to this double fact. "A subsisting reason" is the phrase which would answer at once all these questions. Saint Thomas thus brings the notion of the Word and the notion of Reason into the identity of the human consciousness: "There is nothing which approaches so nearly the 'Incarnation of the Word,' as the union of spirit and body, . . . and this resemblance would be even more complete if the Spirit were

[1] Theology consists of two elements, the one rational and derived from psychological observation and every free speculation of human genius, the other mystical and taken from the special and symbolical experiences of Revealers and Prophets.

one and the same for all men, as has been claimed by some persons. If we accept this hypothesis we should only have to say that Spirit had renewed the act of its union with that which proceeds from human conception. *Quod Intellectus, præ existens hoc modo, de novo conceptui hominis uniatur.* It is in this sense that we repeat in the creed of Saint Athanasius: 'The divinity and the man are one sole Christ, as Reason and the flesh are one sole man.' . . . But nevertheless this comparison is incomplete: the Word could unite itself to our nature in an identity much more wonderful than that in which the spirit is united to the body . . . *because the intellectual nature already participates in the Word in an eminent identity.*" [1]

Mystical conditions of the consciousness of Christ.

II. There is no expression which represents more vividly the mystic fact — the union of transcendent Reason with our consciousness — than the words of Saint John, "He who hath the Bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom standeth near and rejoiceth greatly that he hears the bridegroom's voice." Divine Reason, here called "the Bride," has consummated once, in Time, its union with the spirit of man; the Christ, therefore, according to this theological formula, is at once the fulness of the intellectual life and of the mystical life.[2] All individual Revelations are only vibrations of the Word, heard like an echo in the multitude of prophetic consciences.

[1] St. Th. Aq. *Summ. contra Gentiles*, l. iv., c. xli.

[2] Et per creaturam mutabilem cum admonemur ad veritatem stabilem ducimur, ubi veré discimus, cùm stamus et audimus eum et gaudio gaudemus propter vocem sponsi, reddentes nos unde sumus. — AUGUSTINE, *Liber Confess.* xi. c. viii.

Next let us note the characteristic which, together with the "hypostatic" union, constitutes almost the whole mystic psychology of Christ.[1] Divine Reason having co-existed with all the rest of consciousness from the first instant of Christ's existence, none of the mystical phenomena which constitute or accompany "Inspiration" properly so called, could have occurred in his person. Seers or prophets experience that which religious books themselves call *alienatio mentis*, because they pass into possession of the Absolute *exceptionally*, by an extraordinary action of the "active Intellect." But this very Intellect was in Christ, of ordinary as well as chief right, by virtue of the hypostatic union; for him, therefore, there could be no occasion for "alienation" nor for any act of transcendence.[2] Christ was constantly and personally actuated by the Absolute. Although that which philosophers call "divine thought, pure

[1] We have in view here of course only the human nature of Christ. Theology distinguishes in Christ: first, divine science; second, the beatific vision; third, infused science; fourth, natural or "acquired" knowledge (St. Th. 3e p. q. ix. xii.) The last only comes in the order of our inquiry. Moreover, Theology does not seem any less attentive to the distinction of natures in Christ than to the unity of Person, and, no doubt, does not desire to see these different sorts of knowledge mingled in an identity of consciousness; such identity would be sufficient to destroy the dogma of the distinction. Our part, therefore, is definitely appointed, *and it comprises all which could have entered into the human consciousness of Christ;* we shut out by these words even those attributes which lie half way between the divinity and man and which are suited only to the hypothetical nature of angels.

[2] We acknowledge that when we come to consider some of the gospel facts they seem to have all the marks of mystic alienation. How can the three temptations in the desert, the apparition of angels in the garden of Olives, etc., be interpreted in an objective sense? However, upon the precise point which we have under consideration we adhere to the theological theses as if these exegetical difficulties did not exist.

act" could not occur in his consciousness,[1] yet, at least, all the incalculable resources that the human imagination can offer for the elaboration of ideas and for the work of knowing were effectively employed in Christ for the service of the Word.[2] "Anima Christi per scientiam acquisitatam scivit omnia illa quæ possunt sciri per actionem intellectus agentis."[3] Our intellectual progress is subject to limits which Christ himself, "true man," did not exceed.[4] The "surplus" of divine Reason which the soul of Christ could not utilize, remained out of Time, and was active out of Time; and on this account Christ, being united to this Reason more personally than any man ever was, also longed more ardently to reunite himself to it utterly and to return again to pure Act. "If you loved me you would rejoice that I go to the Father, because my Father is greater than I. . . ." "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."[5]

III. The mystic problem of the "incarnate Word" is rarely stated in exact terms. — That it should be possible for pure and human Reason to define itself and disengage itself from logical or physiological objections: that it should take consistency as the distinct and dominating "fact" of all others which it ought to be, contains the whole matter.

The hypostatic Union and the "spiritual fact."

How can transcendent Reason, if it exists, exist in Time, with man's Reason? It would seem more possible that *originally* they are the same Reason, and that they really

[1] S. Th. 3e p. q. x., a. 1.
[2] S. Th. q. ix., a. 3, 4; q. xii., a. 1, 2.
[3] *Ib.* q. xii., a. 1.
[4] S. Th. q. x., a. 2, 3.
[5] John xiv. 28; xvii. 5.

meet, as some of the most opposed thinkers have believed, in "the world of ideas," in the "intelligible," in the "kingdom of ends," however it may be called. This would seem to be the meaning of the gospel passages: "God is Spirit;" "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" "I and my Father are one;" etc.[1] The genesis of Reason is logically the same fact as the mystic genesis of Christ. It is true that Christian mysticism likes better to use the idea of "Personality" than that of "Reason," and that, as "Person," something more substantial than "power" or "faculty" is introduced into the world by the Word of God; but whichever way it is stated the question remains the same. Personality and Reason, as both philosophy and jurisprudence agree, form in us but one and the same attribute; the problem of man's unity is just as much that of his Reason as of his Personality. Now it is "Reason" or "Personality" precisely in which lies the bond which joins the divine Word to our phenomenal existence; it is that which makes the unity in Christ of the Infinite and man, as it makes in us the identity of all our inner experience, physical or intellectual.[2] The presence of the Word in Christ should cause

[1] John iv. 24; iii. 6; x. 30.

[2] "Sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo ita Deus et homo unus est Christus." (*Symbolum Athanasii.*) Theology uses the term "hypostasis," but we find nothing more exact for the point in question than what is conveyed by the term "Person." Here too is another text in support of an interpretation: "Secundùm ordinem temporis non dicitur in mysterio Incarnationis aliquid medium inter Deum et hominem . . . Sed secundùm ordinem causalitatis ipsa anima est aliqualiter causa carnis uniendæ filio Dei." (3 a p., q. vi. a. 1.) "Si comparemus intellectum, qui spiritus dicitur, ad cæteras animæ partes . . . intellectus est superior et dignior et Deo similior. . . . Et ideo unitum est carni per medium intellectùs Verbum Dei; intellectus enim est quid animæ purissimum, sed et Deus est intellectus." (*Ib.* 16., a. 2.)

no more difficulty in the view of Determinism than the presence of Reason in each one of us; it does not derogate any more from the conditions of Experience.

We are, according to Kant, both subject and lawgiver of an intelligible world with which pure Reason, in order to get moral inspiration, comes in contact for less than an instant, and whence it brings back only an indefinable sense of Freedom. At that point where morality begins, where Reason becomes "practical," — it can, and indeed ought to have *transcendence* over pure Reason. "Love" is this copulative act between infinite Reason and our Reason enclosed in to its empirical relativity, and is the sole cause of mystical facts really worthy of consideration. "Every nature has the act proper to it; . . . the act proper to man is Reason. . . . In God (act pure) there is only the tendency natural to the Good, which is to *communicate* itself. . . . Now, this tendency reaches fulfilment in the hypostatic Union only, because there the created and the Infinite join in one identity, — that is to say, in Personality."[1]

IV. The attempts which have been made to obtain a wholly empirical notion of personality are an example of the little worth psychology can attribute to the explanations of determinism. Were we to descend to unicellular life in order to understand personality, it is to be feared that such a scale of individuation would involve much confusion,[2] and especially is it to be feared lest we

The Personality.

[1] *Summ. Theol.* p. III, q. 1 a. 1. corp. a.

[2] No difficulty is made, at present, in admitting, as original elements of

come under the illusion that at the two extremities, below in the "cell" and above in "Reason," there is only the slightest possible distance to cross, while in reality there are two distinctions, each the most considerable that can be imagined.[1] Personality, as we believe, eludes the explanation of empiricism. In its inner sense, even, it is more out of our reach than other super-empirical facts, freedom for example, with which it would be a mistake to confound it. That concentration of attributes which we name "Person" is both ideal and physical; it is quite as much the centre for all the facts accomplished in us, under the rule of laws called "Determinism," as it is for the events apparently so different for which we feel *responsible*. The unity of the human composite has been too little understood. Character and Life are not in us separable things; there is perhaps nothing more certain and also nothing more inexplicable than this inseparability of two things which, in the sight of our consciousness at least, are totally opposed to each other. Personality is not only the strictest unity which is empirically known to us; it is the very fact itself from which we take our sense

consciousness, absolutely detached states, without a germ of the ego and the non-ego, which may go on aggregating and disaggregating in a hundred ways. This is to disregard the fact that the most elementary of psychological states containing at once both a sensation from without and a reaction from within, contains also, in germ, the contrast of the ego and the non-ego. — Fouillée, *Idées, Forces*, t. ii. p. 400.

[1] "Unless we are willing to attribute a supernatural origin to the 'ego,' we are required to explain how it originates and from what lower form it proceeds." (Ribot, *Les maladies de la Personnalité*, Introd. pp. 1, 2.) Is there truly no middle ground between the empirical explanation of Personality and its supernatural origin? We would rather wait for an answer until we understand better what the word "supernatural" signifies.

of unity. Can it be the result in the human composite of physical events which have their own succession and diversity? Personality evidently precedes and dominates them.[1]

On another hand, must we have recourse to metaphysical unity, and go back again, with Plotinus, to simple-one? But this dizzy abstraction is no longer anything for us, since we can neither experience it as a "fact" nor conceive it as an "idea." We ourselves have no hesitation in adopting "Reason" as the *real and logical* foundation of Personality. Whether we consider Reason as a fact of which we are empirically conscious, or whether we choose to reject it from Life and the world as being a mystical outflow from the Infinite, in either way it is Reason which makes us the "One" living and real which we are. If there be in us anything which attracts to itself the diverse and the unstable, and which holds it if only for a moment, outside the flux of pure phenomena, it is that which we call the "spiritual," and which we consider as "dominating" among all the facts of consciousness. By Reason man subsists: he does not live by it exclusively but it is on account of Reason that he is "man." The life of animals is but a momentary consensus, a sum of events, "informed" by nothing, and related to the ego simply as means of conservation. Reason, on the contrary, transcends the individual and "informs" it with things

[1] According to Empiricism "the personality is the result of two fundamental factors . . . two habits, . . . the bodily senses and the memory." (Ribot, *ib.* p. 77.) Personality is only the ego, which in its turn is "only the permanent possibility of certain events under certain conditions." A "permanent possibility" is simply a contradiction. Even an hypothesis would be better.

which concern neither its own preservation nor that of the race. By it we are linked to the Absolute.

Christian mysticism lives upon symbols which are only the development of this idea: "the apparition of the Word of God in the human conscience." According to Bossuet's expression, Christ is nothing but this apparition, only "more real and true than all the others."[1] In us, the culminating fact is our personality. It is all we have of "divine." Should the light of history reveal to us some Personality animated with more Reason and Will than appeared in Jesus, the theological thesis with all its consequences would be compelled logically to transfer itself to such an One.

[1] *Élévation sur les mystères:* x^e^ semaine, vi. élév.

# CHAPTER SECOND

## SYMBOLISM

### § I. — MYSTICAL EXPRESSION

I. The mystic function consists in the mental production and the moral application of symbols.

II. Knowledge exists only through analogy: even science itself is but a rational series of symbols.

III. Symbolism is mystical when it claims to effect communication of the ego and the non-ego in the totality of the consciousness.

IV. Wherein mysticism claims too much, and what it really accomplishes.

V. Qualities of mystic symbolism: simplicity and vivacity.

VI. Concerning verbal expression — its inadequacy for the mystic consciousness.

I. "RELIGION *embraces all knowledge and all power which is not scientific. The unity of this vast field of the unknowable comes from that unique force which is the source of its fertility and the great mother of myth and rite, — Analogy.*" [1] It is well not to lose sight of these few lines, for there could be no better definition of the mystic or "religious" fact. "Knowledge not scientific" is a surplus of the intellectual life which we cannot get by application of the categories of the understanding to the sensible intuitions, but which seems to be, none the less, an object of universal desire. "Power not scientific"

The mystic function consists in the mental production and the moral application of symbols.

[1] J. Darmesteter, *Rev. philo.* Jan. 1882, t. xiii. p. 76.

is not properly the "supernatural," but it is Freedom, and the whole order of things which we call "moral" as opposed to things which can be determined or measured empirically. In reality, the two series of facts are only the double aspect of one and the same evolution: it is always as "immediate" that the Absolute is posited in the Intelligence and in Freedom, at that indeterminate place in the soul where our ideas take life, and where they begin to change from simple representations and assume form as "desires" or "volitions." The mystic initiative belongs to Freedom; but the religious act is not separable into parts, and the Absolute is posited throughout the consciousness at the same instant.

We reserve for subsequent study this purely moral transcendence which serves as the basis of mysticism. At present we shall give our exclusive consideration to the mental content of "Prophecy," and to the facts of representation which accompany it, without seeking among the mystic conditions that which might be called the "determining" one, and without inquiring whether God becomes present to the soul at the appeal of Love.

The object which appears distinctly to the mystic consciousness is a symbolic representation; and in this sense it may be truly said that Analogy is the *unique force which renders fertile the vast field of mysticism.* The content of symbols cannot be indicated better in a general way and their value cannot be better shown than by saying that "the symbols have a moral power equal to the power of their meaning." It is because they really *create* all our relations with the Absolute that they express them truly. Among all signs,

none leaves in the depths of the consciousness so much of the very thing signified.

II. In order to understand the analogical character of mystic symbols, we must first remind ourselves how far the signs which intervene at every step of the mental life are an actual part of that which they represent.

Knowledge exists only through analogy; even science itself is but a rational series of symbols.

Though the ideal may be more stable and nearer to being than the real, yet it never reaches us under any but the colors of reality and by the ways (winding though they may be) which we call the "senses." Analogy, that is to say, the transference of the proper sense to the "figurative" sense, is the foundation of our mental life. When we say "I comprehend," we see the body of a thought; but the "Word," which is the thought itself, cannot posit itself in the consciousness (and therefore, of course, cannot go out from it) the same that our Reason has discovered it, higher than Reason, stable, silent, incorporeal. No one has ever used the phrase "*that strikes me*," or "*that idea occurs to me*," except by virtue of a relation which Reason discovers between the intellect and the sensory nature.[1] No matter how close the relation may be, it already constitutes an *analogy*. Identity of being and thought exists only above our consciousness, in a Reason which conceives things otherwise than by "representation."

Scientific knowing is only one special use of the Imagination. In itself Reason is an immanent act, always the same "Unity." Knowledge is specialized under the Reason,

[1] Vithney, *La vie du langage*, p. 115.

according to the different aspects which our ideas take when they meet in the consciousness. Science itself lives upon symbols, and though it gravely calls them "facts," what are they but *our* events of consciousness considered in another order than that of logical connection or esthetic conventions? Science keeps for itself those facts of consciousness only, whose sequence seems least dependent on our free activity; do what it will to retain these facts in the understanding in the state of concepts, images must be used for them which are merely anthropomorphic substitutes for the purely mechanical or mathematical terms which ought to be used. Space, Action, Force, etc., would all vanish very quickly were we to attempt to prove them by only admitting as exact that which "is in itself," without image and anterior to all representations. The scholar creates for himself "spectres of quantity," symbols of quality, and these are the means with which he sees things scientifically.[1]

When we pass from pure science to philosophy, the usage of symbols is even more manifest. Without mentioning the myths of Plato and the fictions of Idealism, which have seemed confined to Mysticism, we quote here the interpretation which has been given to the most ancient positivist doctrine which has probably ever existed. "The εἴδωλα of Democritus is nothing else than the opinion which savages have formed of the soul of inanimate things, carried into

[1] "Berkeley replied to Halley, who bantered him upon his Idealism, that a mathemetician is also an idealist, his *ultima ratio* being in reality only ghosts of departed quantities appearing when the terms that produced them vanished." (*La civilisation primitive*, t. i. ch. xi. p. 581.)

another realm and adapted to the explanation of thought phenomena. This similitude of doctrine . . . is an historic transmission, trace of which may be discerned in the times when the religion of the Greeks and their philosophy were bound together. Democritus explains this act of perception by the hypothesis that every object projects from itself images, εἴδωλα, which, assimilating with the surrounding air, penetrate into the soul and make the object perceptible. . . . The animism of savages or the doctrine of a 'phantom' of things only needed transformation in order to become a theory of ideas."[1] We find ourselves here very close to religious symbolism almost without knowing it. The abstraction arising from concepts caused Fetishism[2] and a more advanced stage of reflection gave birth to myths. Why should we expect then, that the most essentially *mystic* thought, the conception of the Absolute, should not require the same efforts of symbolism and should not obey the universal tendency to incarnate the ideal in the sensible?

This law would not be changed in any way by the intellectual excellence of Inspiration. The inspired have always been "Seers" and it has always been matter of the imagination which has furnished the stuff of visions and prophecies. Says Saint Augustine, "Not only do images aid thought in the production of the spiritual from the depths of the mind, but also in cases of Prophecy."[3] It may even be said that there is unanimity in defining Prophecy as a state of intense consciousness, the interior image having

[1] *La civilisation primitive*, t. i. p. 579.
[2] *Ib.* t. ii. pp. 316, 320.
[3] Epist. ci.

then acquired the same intensity as the images of direct perception. After Saint Augustine it may suffice to quote Spinoza: "We may assert without scruple that the Prophets knew that which God revealed to them through their imagination only; that is, through the intermediary of words or images, either true or fantastic."[1]

III. All the images in which dialectic thought clothes itself do not properly bear the name of "symbols" if we compare them with the representations by which the Absolute shines out in the consciousness. The term "symbolic knowledge" has been rightly reserved for the efforts which have been made to penetrate into the unknowable.

Symbolism is mystical when it claims to effect communication of the ego and the non-ego in the totality of the consciousness.

Ancient mythology, it may be said, consisted of one vast symbolism, whose matter was made up of such world-events or such soul-events as had most deeply impressed the Greek imagination. Mars, Venus, Minerva, and so forth, on one side, Phœbus, Saturn, and Neptune, on the other, were simply suggestive symbols, the latter objective representations, the former representations of the feelings and passions. But the Greek genius, the least mystic of any we know, had but very few symbols intended to unite the soul and the world in one expression. Very little thought was bestowed by this busy and positive people upon the means by which they might enter into possession of the Absolute. Their theology was not mystic, nor even moral, but simply artistic.

It is proper to recall here that at the root of mysticism there is nothing but a tendency to make the synthesis of

[1] *Traité théologico-politique*, t. ii. p. 32.

the ego and the non-ego, of Determinism and Freedom, in the consciousness itself. It is this which accounts for the exuberance of the mystic consciousness. When we become conscious naturally of the non-ego, it gives us a shock, until it can be explained and adapted to our desires. So we try to approach it in some other way. We make the supposition that at the root of the non-ego there is still Consciousness and Freedom, and we aspire to represent to ourselves their conciliation by symbols whence are forcibly excluded every appearance of antipathy and contradiction. The mystical character of symbols ought to be thus defined: an effort to conceive the Absolute in an adequate representation, — not as adequate to the Absolute, which is unknowable, but as adequate to our proper consciousness.

All other cases of symbolism consist in the clear interpretation of a fact of consciousness or a group of facts of consciousness; thus we have symbols for art, for science, and so forth, according as we wish to represent the esthetic or rational connection of our sensible intuitions. Let us take two examples of symbolism proper; that is to say, two cases of analogy whose terms are not at the minimum distance from each other, as for scientific knowledge, but at the maximum.[1] There is an association of feelings and

[1] Analogy proper consists in an association of images which we form for the purpose of perceiving a relation existing outside of us or in another portion of our consciousness. We do not think that this is a departure from any of the best definitions of analogy which have been given: "Analogy is a reasoning which infers, from a given resemblance of certain points, a resemblance of other points." (Rabier, *Logique*, p. 127.) "Analogy is a process of mind which results from the observation of relations to the reason of the relations." (Cournot, *Essais sur les fondements de nos connaissances*, t. i. p. 95.)

perceptions which we experience every year which bears the name of "springtime"; the soft, balmy air, perfumes, the first flowering things, etc., all constitute outside of us a state of Nature and inside of us a state of consciousness which cannot possibly find any other representation than by symbols. Various kinds of them have been created. In an order of facts far removed from the example we have taken, in the moral order, the idea of Justice (with all the associations which the susceptibilities and the imagination can add) becomes symbolical matter which takes on more or less expressive forms, such as the Scales, etc. We have taken as example two cases of symbolism where the representation is broadly suggestive and synthesizes a great number of facts of consciousness. Now, the esthetic or moral analogy which these symbols evoke might be multiplied throughout a larger or smaller extent of consciousness, according to the receptivity of the subjects or the more or less skilful choice of symbolic signs, yet it would always remain partial or local. Not in any case does analogy ask to generalize itself so far as to embrace the whole consciousness, and to set in movement all its powers. That is the special property of mystical symbolism. The mystic Absolute, as we have seen, does not withdraw to the heights of the mind, but takes possession of the whole soul, and in that is its distinction from the rational Absolute.

Without considering here the question of Inspiration, and even attributing all facts of mystic experience to auto-suggestion, no one can fail to recognize in these facts the double character of spontaneity and mental profusion.

According to the word which Maimonides uses, it is the "irruption" of the Absolute into the consciousness; and how are we to understand this fact, if not in that it rouses in the consciousness the most quick and strenuous expressions that can be imagined, in order to see and feel the new relation which has just established itself between our spirit and the Absolute? The only truly mystic expression is found in the symbols which answer to this need, and which tend to effect communication between the ego and the non-ego in the consciousness.

IV. We must ask ourselves the question how it is possible to create symbols of such power of suggestion that they bring, in one instant, all that a man is capable of willing, feeling, and thinking to the horizon of the consciousness. Under what influence may it happen to us to come into possession at once of all the riches of morality, intelligence, and sensibility which man can have in himself, and to rejoice in them, in one and the same act of life, Reason, and freedom? If it is to that which mysticism tends it would seem that it must soon end in feebleness and contradiction. In fact, we have not the power to appear to ourselves anything but what we are, a series of events, a stream of vicissitudes, — sometimes joyful and sometimes sad. And, in fine, the consciousness of the whole man at once would seem as impossible a thing as the co-existence of the whole of a life in one single moment.

Wherein mysticism claims too much; and what it really accomplishes.

And yet, however all this may be, it is toward just such a total and effectual taking hold of the whole consciousness

that mysticism tends. To obtain possession of the Absolute is, in all seriousness, no other thing.

Religious writers, after experiencing some symbolic vision, have given us definitions of God so abounding in Imagination, Love, and Reason as to afford never ending delight to meditative souls.[1] In reading them we understand the exuberance, exempt however from confusion, which distinguishes the state of soul in question. The mystic writer

[1] Here is an example from the "Confessions of St. Augustine": "What is it, then, that I love when I love my God? What is he whom my soul feels above itself? I have tried to grasp it in my own intelligence, above all images of things; but at the moment when I reach that seat of being I cannot fix my gaze, and I fall back helpless into the common thoughts. I have carried away nothing from this vision but a memory full of love, and as it were a regretful longing for things whose perfume is felt but which are out of reach. What is it, then, that I love, O my God, when I love you? It is not beauty of bodies, nor the glory which passes, nor the light which our eyes love; it is not the varied harmony of sweet songs, nor the aroma of perfumes and sweet flowers, nor the voluptuous joys of carnal embraces. No, it is none of these that I love when I love my God; and yet in this love I find a light, an inner voice, a perfume, a savor, an embrace of a kind which does not leave the inmost of myself. There in the depths of the soul glows something which is not in space: there a word is heard which has no syllables: thence there breathes a perfume which no breezes waft away: there food is always savored and never eaten: there are embraces which never ask to end. . . . Sometimes, O God, you create a state of soul in me so extraordinary, and you fill me with so intimate a joy, that, if it lasted, all life would be different. . . . Who shall understand, who shall express God? What is it that comes thus by moments to shine into the eyes of my soul and make my heart beat with fear and love? It is something quite other than myself, and for this reason I am frozen with terror; it is something identical with myself, and therefore I am kindled with love." (Augustine, Conf. l. x. 7; l. vii. 17; l. x. 6, 40; l. xi. 9.) These are the very ultimate terms which Saint Augustine could find in which to give a positive definition of God. We have designedly chosen our example from him, for he is not by temperament a mystic, and for this reason his attempts heighten the evidence that the religious fact tends, by virtue of a psychological law, to produce a plenitude of consciousness by the concourse of symbols and love.

has no dialectic explanation to make regarding the object by which he is possessed, but it seems to be his whole consciousness exhaling itself in cries of the heart, in terms as synthetic as language can furnish. Esthetic images, first notions of Reason, personal remembrance, ardors of desire, moral emotions — are all compressed into a few lines, like a life rushing forth, a soul eager to take instant flight, under the mystic urgence, towards the Absolute which pierces it with look and grace.

It is almost superfluous to observe that the state of mystic consciousness can be only imperfectly realized, because, in our present state of existence, one need and one act suffice to monopolize the whole psychic activity. This kind of experience can therefore of necessity be only "tentative." [1] It is quite true that certain of the more elevated functions of the mind (eloquence, poetry, etc.) can occupy a large extent of consciousness at the same moment, and engage the senses, the imagination, the understanding in a common movement; but the mystic prerogative goes much further than this. When we come to really comprehend it there is no ambition so high. Far above all that *conditions* him, man would fain unite himself to the Absolute as Force and Necessity are united in things, and as Freedom and Life are united in himself, and rest therein esthetically, — put an end, by one stroke, to all intellectual unrest and the tyranny of the passions; and as crowning effort, abolish death, at least,

[1] "Not as though I had attained (the divine union), but I follow after, and forgetting all that is behind I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling." (Philippians iii. 12–14.)

morally. The mystic effort could find no better rendering than as the exact opposite of the nihilistic tendency which Hartmann speaks of. According to him there is no other way to reach supreme satisfaction except by return to the Unconscious; the mystic consciousness, on the contrary, aspires above all things after fulness of Life, and by its communings with the Absolute to grow beyond its natural powers. Opposed as these two methods may be, they rest perhaps upon an identical foundation in the moral nature: each betrays in equal degree the insatiable nature of desire.

The mystic ambition, it is true, is commonly retained within just bounds by Reason. Man understands that the height of his consciousness is Freedom, and that the height of Freedom is in such acts of "disinterestedness" as remove him farthest from the passive character of instinct. He also understands that, though limited in every other way, there is this one place in his soul which is open to access, and that here only the Absolute can manifest itself to him, and the bounds of his relativity be broadened. True mysticism — that is, a "disinterested" mysticism and one free from passions — will turn all its attention this way.

It is very certain that the Absolute posits itself only *morally* in the consciousness, and that it *is* not any of the elements which represent it to us symbolically. But we may ask, is not that itself, this moral presence of the Absolute in the consciousness, pure illusion? For the Absolute is as "unconditioned" as it is unknowable. When man touches the Absolute through morality he must not think that he

finds there some divine "stream," as we say in our inability to give it other expression, nor must he think that the Absolute in us becomes "conditioned." If we may say that the Absolute posits itself in the human consciousness, it does so in a "human" manner, and without assuming anything of the human itself.

Will some insist that "to come under the consciousness, even *morally*, is to be 'conditioned'"? There is not any consciousness here in the sense of the objection. Between the intellectual intuition and the sensible intuition, which are each produced by some actual exciting cause and could not therefore be referred to the Absolute, there is a middle term which is mystic symbolism. An analogical representation, called out by Desire, reaches us, and the Divine immutable action accompanies this appearance so closely that to us they seem to be but one fact; but the effect of this divine action is only *moral;* that is to say, it does not indicate any inherent causality, like that which we receive by means of "representation." At the root of symbols we perceive only ourselves. Is the Absolute, then, posited in contradiction to himself? No. In the relation which begins between God and the Soul, it is not the Absolute which is "determined," it is ourselves; and the principle of this determination is not a motion which is produced in the Immutable, but it is rather that the soul transports itself into the Immutable, in such way as it can, by a motion no longer in Space or Time, — an act of Freedom. We shall see that the symbols, saving for what they deposit of the new and the better in Freedom, are only sublime errors.

V. The part of mystic symbols seems to be to give stable equilibrium to the consciousness, as much as to furnish it with representations. Never, in truth, does the consciousness so much need to be "fixed" as in the moments when it aspires to the Infinite. We shall learn that during the mystic state the imaginative and affective life flow to the organic centres, in order that the mind may *give to itself* the Object of its search, which is greater than it. The analogy of the Infinite, too vast for the consciousness to hold, threatens at every moment to overflow its bounds unless the imagination can fix for itself signs in which to circumscribe it; by grace of these supremely chosen signs, however, the representation is made to last, the consciousness is exalted without lapsing into incoherence, and the mystic suggestion soars, free and pure, towards the Reason. "Man's minde could never be maintained if it were still floting up and downe in this infinite deepe of shapeless conceits. They must be *framed with her to some image* according to her model. The majesty of God hath in some sort suffered itself to be circumscribed to corporall limits. His supernaturall and celestiall Sacraments bear signs of our terrestriall condition." [1]

Qualities of mystic symbolism: simplicity and vivacity.

It is this which explains the simplicity of the symbolical representations. The greatest of mystics have not given us any such surcharged and inextricable visions as those begotten of the Romantic genius. In an imagination stimulated by the passions, images pile themselves up, and events are complicated, until the passions themselves are exhausted.

[1] Montaigne, *Essais*, Hachette, p. 321.

Under the action of mystic Desire, on the contrary, a very few signs suffice to put the consciousness in possession of its object, but these few signs join to their extreme simplicity an all-powerful suggestiveness. Let us take as an example the vision given to the prophet Elijah. "A voice said to him: 'Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord': and, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord: but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and then a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire *a still small voice,* and hearing it Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle." It would seem that the consciousness of the Prophet, in which the Absolute was on the verge of manifestation, were trying several symbols, and that it could not succeed in making God appear by images of the mightiest phenomena; but only in a symbol of extreme simplicity, and one leading to self-withdrawal and mystic intimacy, could the soul of Elijah experience that mental plentitude which proclaims the presence of God.

To the simplicity of its figurative elements, mystic symbolism adds the utmost vivacity of expression. Symbolism is not mystic unless it fulfils the two conditions of invoking the Infinite in the mind and making him living or "known of the heart." Metaphysicians have more than once borrowed symbolical figures from the abstract sciences to represent the Infinite; in this way the "circle" has come to be taken, a little too insistently perhaps, as the symbol of

Eternity. "Deus est sphæra intelligibilis, cujus centrum est ubique et circumferentia nusquam."[1] But symbols of this kind fail in one condition necessary to the mystic symbol: they are not vital in the consciousness, and are more like the "verbal expression" which appeals directly to the Intelligence only.

VI. Symbolism is a *synthetic* expression, the inverse of verbal expression, which is always more or less *analytical.*

Concerning verbal expression: its inadequacy for the mystic consciousness.

The common function of both is to externalize the facts of consciousness, and for this reason both of them partake as much of us as of things, as much of our life itself as of objective verity. Objects enter into ourselves, and do not leave again, no matter what form of expression has been chosen, until they are impregnated with feeling, with Reason, with freedom. There is said to be a "life of language" but there is also, with greater reason, a "life of Symbols." Verbal expression transfers the content of our consciousness with too great analytic deliberation for it to reach others entire and alive, while symbols are posited in the imagination as a concrete "whole," and they "appear." Symbolical signs have the same effect as direct perceptions: as soon as they have been "seen" within, their psychic action takes hold of the feeling and fills the consciousness with a crowd of images and emotions which are attracted by the force of Analogy. Expressions of this kind fulfil the exigencies of our nature. Too many complex things exist, at once too extended and too indivisible to be susceptible of presentation to the consciousness by dialectic

[1] St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, c. v.

processes. Perhaps also there are states of soul in which we are conscious of a need to think things, feel them, and see them all at the same time. We revert to symbols, therefore, to make up for the inadequacy of language and at moments when we feel that we would fain comprehend things with the whole soul; by their aid only can we attain the state called "mystic" which is the synthesis of the heart, the Reason, and the Senses, around an object which is so perfect as to transport our whole being.

Let us note also that a symbol is neither a direct image nor a logical group of images; it does not represent, but it rather suggests. We mean to say that the symbol brings to the horizon of the consciousness an abundance of images which have a more or less strong bond of analogy and which become for us (though not so really) an "object." This remark is specially significant when mystic symbolism is in question. Around the symbolic object and with it, all the sentiments relating to it reach us: there is an outbreak of admiration, joy, sympathy, respect, desire, and so on. If the soul could pass, at this instant, from the mystical state to the purely critical, it would not have to disclaim any of its sentiments, we feel sure (we are speaking of mysticism in its purest sense); the perplexity would be whether more of objective verity than of itself is contained in the object which is so transporting. But what does it matter? Philosophy does not repudiate the Gospel phrase "The Kingdom of God is within you." Besides, this is not the exclusive province of mystic symbolism. If we consider the symbols most commonly used, — in the moral order, the symbols of

"Labor," of "Justice," of "Freedom," etc.; in the esthetic or real order, the symbols of "Life," the "Seasons," the "Elements," — what are they made of? Are they made out of things, or out of us?

Mysticism lives upon symbols; this is the only expression which is proper to it. That mystic verbal expression, the "Scriptures," when it does not relate to pure morals, is only the analytical translation of symbols; they have been produced by an overshadowing of the Absolute positing itself in the consciousness in a manner at once irresistible and indeterminate, while it, the Scripture, has thought them out. Throughout religious history symbolism appears like a mental "irruption" of the Absolute which puts the seers into a state of alienation. Had Isaiah had a dialectic conception of the idea of "Holiness" we should have a page of philosophy on the subject, instead of the vision in the sixth chapter of his "Prophecies."[1] All this is a symbol, which was given to the Prophet in an intense state of consciousness, which is reproduced in ours in its quiescent state when we read over this wonderful page. The mystic notion of the Trinity, which is a symbol psychological above all others, doubtless could never have come into the human consciousness dialectically;

[1] "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. At the highest degree, below God, stood two seraphins: each one had six wings; with twain he covered the face of God, with twain he covered his feet, and they held themselves in space with other twain. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. Then said I, Woe is me! not to have spoken; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of an unclean people: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphins unto me having a live coal in his hand which he had taken from off the altar, and he laid it upon my mouth." (Isaiah vi. 1–17.)

the vision of Abraham as given in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis was, as it were, the first sketch of it in the mystic consciousness.[1]

Religious dogmas, it may be said, are only the dialectical development of symbols which have dawned in the souls of the great mystics. How could it be otherwise, there being no more direct relation possible between our mind and the Absolute?

## § II. — MYSTIC INTUITION

I. Mystic Intuition enables us to perceive the facts of Freedom through and above the empirical consciousness, in a manner the inverse of Abstraction.

II. The mystic consciousness sees only itself covered over with the symbols which make apparent its tendencies towards the Infinite.

III. The mystic act is incommunicable. — Mystic privilege.

IV. Law of symbolic communication.

V. The mystic symbols as mental object.

I. We have seen that mystic action is twofold: the imagination is put in motion to produce symbols, and afterwards Reason proceeds to exercise the intuition proper to it.

[1] "And the Lord appeared unto Abraham as he sat in the door of his house in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and rising up he bowed himself down to adore them, and said, Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched to wash your feet (of all three), and rest yourselves under the tree. . . . And they answered, So do as thou hast said. . . . And after they had eaten they said to Abraham, Where is Sarah thy wife? . . . And he said, Behold in the house. And (the Lord) said, . . . I will return . . . and Sarah shall have a son. . . . And they went away towards Sodom, and Abraham remained in the presence of the Lord: and he drew near again to say to him (in the ruin of Sodom), Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen. xviii. 1–23). This narration is incomprehensible according to all the ordinary laws of intelligibility. It is a case of mystic alienation, a symbolical vision of the Divinity in three persons.

There is never any breach of the intellectual law. Before the rational work begins, a sum of representations is always presented to the consciousness; and we could no more conceive forms sculptured in the void than an act of intellection without such presentation of mental images. It appears, then, that the mystic Evolution begins in the mind by "species," or images, produced under a moral influence, which we reserve for future explanations; these images are the analogical representations, or "symbols."

Mystic Intuition enables us to perceive the facts of Freedom through and above the empirical consciousness in a manner the inverse of Abstraction.

Reason, then, works upon the symbols, but the matter to be abstracted from them must not be confounded with any other kind of intellectual product. We must not forget that we have here, not a question of objective Knowledge, in the empirical and direct sense of the word "object," but of mystic *analogy*, having for its purpose to objectivate the Absolute in *another* plane of the consciousness, and one much more intimate and deep than the exterior world. Things oppose themselves to the ego only; the Absolute is opposed to the ego, it is true: but the more it *becomes apparent*, the more it tends to merge itself with the ego in a process exactly the inverse of Abstraction. What we call "concepts" or "ideas," and all kinds of abstraction, to whatever degree they may be carried, could not equal all that the Reason needs for its mystic purposes. It is not an act of intellection which posits in the consciousness the special effects which we define to the best of our ability as "*our sense of religious relations with the Infinite.*" The mystic intellection is wholly con-

tained in the words of Pascal: "*God known of the heart.*" The work of intellection is upon the symbols, but its incommunicable discoveries are expressed "of the heart,"—in Freedom.

What are the appreciable results of this symbolic presence of the Absolute in the consciousness? What do we acquire from it? If the results were "ideas" or "concepts" we might pronounce the content to be empirical or rational. But strictly speaking there is no such thing as "mystic knowledge." The experience of "seers" reduces itself to the same elements of representation as our common experience, and God does not create for their use any new "category" to unify the understanding to a higher degree. But this is very far from saying that the mystic act is only illusory. By the ordinary mental species, logical, scientific, and esthetic communications are made between the world and ourselves, but the mystic symbols aid us to effect a synthesis in which the consciousness aspires to feel that unity which dominates all the others, that creative Love which absorbs in itself Science, Art, etc. After these efforts of the mystic consciousness, it cannot be said, the least in the world, that Reason has gained any more ground in the Unknowable; but the conditions which are established in us during this moral and analogical research after the Absolute are very remarkable: they tend to impart the greatest inward vigor to the will, to the moral principles, to the character, and to inspire us with a realizing sense of the Infinite. The representative action of symbols culminates, therefore, in a moral presence of the Absolute: and it reinforces, in

an incomparable manner, the natural powers and the qualities proper to the subject.

Although the Absolute posits itself in us "symbolically" only, and in such manner that things "known" expressible in concepts do not properly result, there remain, however, other things, to which Pascal gave the appellation "the Rule of Charity," and which he held higher than any other thing, than even existence itself. Knowledge, in the restrictive sense of science, is perhaps *less ourselves* than the other elements of the consciousness. The practical value, for the mass of men, of the intuitions of Taste, moral pleasure, and certain precious reserves of character, far surpasses that of pure science. Is it not, moreover, only in these conditions of the ego that we can find an answer to the question "Is life worth living?"

II. There is so little objective representation in symbols that the logic of symbolism requires, to the contrary, that Reason shall detach itself from apparent species. The subject enters into nearer communion with the Absolute if he has not allowed himself to be *captivated* by the perception of the images themselves, and when he has reserved himself entirely for the impressions of another nature which the mystic act is to produce. The deeper the Soul penetrates, under the suggestive action of Symbols, into its own veritable essence, which is pure Reason and Freedom, the more it becomes capable, approximately, of the attributes of the Absolute which it aspires to take on.

The mystic consciousness sees only itself covered over with the symbols which make apparent its tendencies towards the Infinite.

But since in that there is no "representation," where is the secret of the mystic analogy, and upon what foundation

does the construction of symbols rest? It is this. Everything affecting the ego is posited in the consciousness by means of representations. When such affections are of organic or moral origin, and nothing outside the consciousness answers to them, we exert ourselves to represent them *mentally*, and not merely by sounds and gestures. The images proper are themselves entirely lacking, and therefore we ask the aid of extraneous imaginative species. Hence arises a case of very special analogy, having for terms, on one side, the subjective consciousness (the intelligible ego, free and alive), striving to express itself, and on the other side, the objective or reflective consciousness of the non-ego, lending its representation to the former.[1] Mystics, in this respect, are not better off than the average man who lacks the terms to define directly the *good* or the *evil* with which he feels himself organically affected. Mystics are aware in themselves of certain tendencies which are excessive, according to the calculations of determinism (such as duty, instinct

[1] Kant speaks in the following terms of this opposition of the intelligible ego and the empirical ego, which it is important not to lose sight of for a moment, if we wish to understand the mystic act. "This distinction of the sensible and the empirical world applies to man himself. *Empirically* he knows his nature only as phenomenon, that is to say, according to the way in which his consciousness is affected. But, at the same time, above this collocation of pure phenomena which he finds in his proper subjectivity, he is forced to admit something else which serves them for basis, viz.: his ego, whatever its intimate nature may be; and consequently he is bound to consider himself as partaking of the sensible world, in regard to the mere perception of phenomena, and receptivity of sensations, and as partaking of the intelligible world, in regard to that which belongs to him as *pure activity* (that is to say, as to that which reaches the consciousness immediately, and not through the senses), of which he knows nothing more." (*Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 106, 107.)

of the better, consciousness of pure Act and Being, etc.), and which, taken altogether, may be called the "religious" fact or sense; but nothing empirical answering to these tendencies, in spite of their distinct place in the consciousness, each one seeks to illuminate for himself the Absolute by analogies proportioned to the need he feels to complete these natural pre-notions of the Infinite. However, the organic subjectivity (do we even need to say it?) could not for any length of time be compared with that of mystic impressions. Who can measure the distance between the senses of the body, where meet, more or less obscurely, the organic reflexes, and that portion of the consciousness where we feel the distinct appeal of Duty?

When we wish to sound to their depths these feelings, or "facts of Reason," and distinguish their Object from all the rest which is posited in Time and Space, we may do our best to intellectualize our images, and interrogate ourselves by words of deepest interior meaning; we shall never reach the bottom. The very efforts we make serve only to dilute the essence of all we desire to grasp, and we tend still nearer to the indeterminate and the unconscious. The mystic consciousness, on the contrary, without exhausting itself in abstractions, makes *naïve* efforts to *imagine* the Absolute, under the safeguard of arming itself with only the purest desire; and in our opinion there is no better method to have the assurance of "seeing God."

III. The symbols which arise in the consciousness of Prophets could not be effective for every consciousness (unless there were some identical and universal supernatural action,

which we cannot at present consider). Of all mental representations there are none more rebellious of fixedness and of being generalized as types. Through Freedom we arrive at the Absolute, and every time that we are in a condition to transport ourselves thither by an act of disinterestedness, a distinct and original symbolic creation will take place. Symbols have no efficiency unless they are *given* to the mind from within and for it alone. The symbols which are crystallized in the state of narrative or painting can only live again in other consciences by reproduction of the mystic fact which originated them.

The mystic act is incommunicable. Mystic privilege.

There is no greater danger for mysticism than the tendency to allow the symbols to become objects; and by this road it soon degenerates into fanaticism. Symbols have no significant value except at the moment when the Absolute is posited by their means in the consciousness; at all other times they are empty and lifeless to the very person who has once drawn mystic enthusiasm from them. With even more reason they must not be invested with the same customary function as signs of language. We cannot remind ourselves too often that the mystic fact consists in relations between the Absolute and Freedom which are *incommunicable*. We can never know, for example, what was the state of consciousness of some citizen of the antique world when he yielded himself without reserve to the inspired suggestions of the "sacred Fire," or some other image calling out the Infinite. The most perfect notion of God which has ever been conceived is "the Being forever communicating its

own essence:"[1] by it we have authority to believe that the symbols under which God really gives himself, and which are more interior than any other sort of mental image, may arise in every sincere human consciousness.

It would be inconsistent, therefore, to wish to stamp certain exterior symbols with the obligatory character of precepts of the moral law. Both of them, it is true, tend towards putting us into relation with the Absolute, but upon what different grounds! The moral law has been fused with the Reason, and from this identity it holds its universal, *à priori* value. Symbols, however, come into the Consciousness *à posteriori* only, in order to fulfil the relations which have commenced between Freedom and the Absolute, in individual conditions of temperament and imagination. Since we have no common measure but Reason, it does not seem plain whence the mystic symbols would acquire any universal obligatory value. Though we should talk of "higher evidence," the very fact of its being higher excludes the universality inseparable from the idea of obligation and of Moral law. We must believe *à priori* that the symbols remain enclosed in the strictest subjectivity. Would not any attempt to make them obligatory be, at the same time, an attempt upon the mystic fact, which is only "sacred" so far as it is "secret" and appertaining to Freedom?[2]

[1] "Ipsa natura Dei est essentia bonitatis — Pertinet autem ad rationem boni ut se aliis communicet." (*Summa Theol.* p. iii., q. i., a. 1.)

[2] We shall treat, in the third part of this work, of the things themselves true and invariable which are presented to the consciousness under such infinitely free representations. They constitute that source of pure activity and Freedom which we call the Personality, where dwells the Absolute exclusively.

It is permissible to say, perhaps, that morality leads to Mysticism, but if we say it, by what variety of symbols must we recognize that the Absolute is enabled to manifest itself to Freedom? Who knows whether the positivist, least trammelled by spiritual doctrines, does not pass through states of consciousness in which the Absolute appears to him under the very least symbolic co-efficient, that his will may be led to non-rational acts of disinterestedness; and who can say that God does not make himself "known of the heart" in paths where we should least dream of meeting him? The mystic species which serve as symbols of the Absolute are sunk deep in the unconscious, and leave it only at the desired moment, strange and vivid as the species of the dream: but the Vision of the "Heart" will often be most fruitful when least looked for. These spontaneous apparitions, formed of all that is subtlest in the Imagination, more interior perhaps than the visions of the dream or of ecstasy, leave nothing more positive in the memory than that we have been lifted morally above ourselves and loosed for one moment from the Determinism of the instincts; but we know that they have been, and that by them the Absolute has taken ground in the Freedom of men least apparently religious, as well as in consciences avowedly devoted to the research of mystic phenomena. A high and sincere morality should be sufficient, without exception, to place the Heart in contact with God. There is a power as intuitive as faith, as unitive of our Spirit with the Infinite as faith could be. This is the power of Good-Faith. It was of this intuition of the heart that Pascal spoke when he answered himself with these words of Jesus: "Be com-

forted. Hadst thou not found me thou wouldest not seek me." [1]

Law of symbolic communication.

IV. In this study of ours, which is purely psychological, we have no desire to claim or to deny to any doctrine the privileges of Inspiration. Besides, we would observe once more that the mystic object is only an ensemble of relations between the Absolute and Freedom. The records of the purest Christian mysticism contain nothing else: the fundamental symbol of the Trinity, for example, is the divine essence and the essence of our soul both fused in one embracing pattern; [2] and all other symbols are but a system of similar relationships, as impenetrable to criticism as the consciousness of the symbolical representations which have served as their basis.

Still less is it our province to develop the question of how an ensemble of symbols born in the individual consciousness of the Prophet or Seer should come to assume the proportions of a social fact or "a Religion." Taking the matter itself as an accomplished fact, without discussion, it is our opinion that Inspiration is to Faith what the states of consciousness called "intense," are to the states of consciousness called "weak." In the same way that the latter may be regarded as reflections of the former, the Absolute (according to the theological thesis) is posited in the general consciousness by means of the same symbols which have originated in extraordinary ways in the prophetic consciousness. The whole

[1] *Le Mystère de Jésus*, p. 544.

[2] A created Trinity which God effects in our souls represents to us the increate Trinity. — BOSSUET, *Elévations sur les Mystères*, 2e semaine, 6e élév.

originality of symbols therefore goes back to the Inspiration. Faith, then, does nothing but confide itself to those primitive symbols, or rather to those who present them as from God.

Properly speaking there is no such thing as "mystic education;" there is nothing but moral education. We may exhibit the symbols to others, but until the Absolute is posited in the consciousness, beneath all the symbols, the mystic intuition has not taken place and the symbolical presentment remains uncomprehended. It will become a fatigue to the mind if persisted in, and to hesitating consciences it might become an obsession of images. Desperate and repeated efforts to grasp at all cost the representative value of religious symbols have more than once brought on intellectual deterioration. If there are fixed symbols they must not be counter to the principle which we have just established; the mystic intuition is always essentially conditioned by the moral dispositions of the subject. The term "mystic education," therefore, must be understood within the limits of the twofold condition: first, the development of the moral aptitudes of the subject in the first place, and by the most natural means; second, an infinite discretion in the presentation of any symbol whatever. It appertains only to God and to Freedom to meet in an embrace which will be more religious if its pure and perfect subjectivity has remained untroubled.

V. The character of "divine efflux" which certain writers have wrongly assigned to the intellectual vision should have been reserved for the mystic intuition.

When we use natural signs and ordinary mental expressions, we are referring them to objects already seen, and which we need only go to the mind "to find again." "Words warn us to look for things . . . and that person alone teaches me something who can show my eyes or my thought something to be learned."[1] But who is it who can present to the mystic consciousness the object of its search? The field of knowing may be divided into three regions: the realities of the world, the ideas of Reason, and all which lies beyond, the object of the mystic's search. Saint Augustine takes for argument that the ideas of the Reason are not of any objective value for this world, and believes that he can thus found his "Ontology." At the present day this logical process seems to be rather doubtful. If there be anything not to be approached empirically, let us not say that it is pure thought, the God of the idealists, but rather let us say that it is the infinite Being with which the mystic Consciousness aspires to come into relations of all kinds by the power of Love. "What I learn," says Saint Augustine in the same connection, "is not from the man who speaks to me and whose knowledge I acquire; it is what his words induce me to seek, and for which I must go direct to that Verity which reigns in my understanding, and ask. He whom we go thus to consult, and who gives knowledge, is Christ who dwells in the inner man, and who is the eternal Wisdom of God. Every rational man, it is true, consults this inner Reason, but to each is granted only that which he can comprehend, and his

The mystic symbols as mental object.

[1] Saint Augustine, *Libro de Magistro*, ch. x., xi.: op. t. i. pp. 240, 241.

own good-will is the measure."[1] Although these are beautiful words, they are not exempt from obscurity caused by not properly distinguishing the orders of knowing.

It is not all which the mystic has to do "to find again" by means of words that which other consciences see like his own in our common Reason, but, his imagination being in a peculiar "symbolical" state, there is another intuition to be accomplished. The principle of this intuition is no other than the active Intellect, no doubt; but we must not forget that the source of all diversity in knowing is the mental disposition, or if you prefer, the correlation of the interior "species." Unless the mystic symbols are merely play or incoherent dreams, they will be accompanied by a corresponding intuition. Their exciting cause in the consciousness, as we have seen, is some act of transcendent Desire; it must be then that the increate Light, who takes for measure the good-will of the recipient, without ceasing itself to be indivisible, illuminates these mystic signs with intensest glow, and that thus appear to the spirit, not the scientific order of phenomena, nor the logical order of ideas, but its own direct and more than speculative relations with the Absolute to which the mystic consciousness truly aspires.

[1] *De Magistro*, loc. cit.

## § III. — MYSTIC ALIENATION

I. Imagination the mother of symbols.
II. Distinction between the objectiveness of mystic phenomena and the verity of symbols.
III. Non-objectiveness of mystic phenomena.
IV. Of mystic Hallucination.
V. The various mystic phenomena: the prophetic Dream: Voices, the Stigmata, Ecstasy.

I. Such are the treasures of the Imagination that they suffice to furnish all the representative stuff which could be desired for the symbols. If we attempt to analyze the chimerical elements of our ordinary dreams, or of those other dreams of which art and romance are woven, we find a sort of infinity about them and a varied energy of fiction beyond the power of genius to exhaust. Besides, were their originality absolute and if it did not consist solely in the perpetually renewed combination of mental species, the content of visions could never be revealed. The miraculous, unimaginable creation would return to unconsciousness and oblivion, even for the Seer himself.

Imagination the mother of symbols.

The real soul of the imaginative groups is in thought, and the intensity of the thought is the cause of the transcendence of all Inspirations.

Duns Scotus asserts that "all creatures become symbols when grace illuminates him who sees them."[1] Accepting only

[1] "In nullo Deitas intelligitur existentium quia superat omnia: cum verò per condescensionem *quandam* ineffabilem in ea quæ sunt multis *obtutibus* inspicitur, ipsa sola invenitur esse. . . . Ideòque omnis visibilis et *invisibilis* creatura 'Theophania,' id est divina operatio potest appellari." (*Divisione naturæ*, i. iii. 19: oper. éd. 1838, p. 240.)

such philosophic truth as this may contain, it must be said that things do not range themselves in the consciousness under the empirical aspect only, but that they also assume in it a coloring which is mystical, poetical, or scientific, according to the dispositions of the subject at the moment. Moreover, symbols will never be found anywhere but in that inner world which mystics carry in themselves and which reflects the other in so many ways. These elements, already assimilated in the consciousness, are the material of visions, celestial voices, etc. What there is of mystical in it is, that the intellectual Power (be it called "natural" or "divine") redoubles its action upon the mind of the Seer, and that the Imagination, entirely passive, offers itself to the Reason as a very living source of elements capable of idealization.

According to common opinion, no direct influence is exerted upon us from God except through intellectual channels; but how far within us does this influence reach? Upon the point in question, it would seem that by a sudden accession of mental activity, the imaginative faculty quite as much as the rational is put in motion; between them there is more than proximity of consciousness, there is unity of act. If we add that the mystic influence forcibly impels the mind to fix itself upon one single object of thought, does it not follow that all the treasures of representation which lie dormant in the memory flow towards that one object? In this way an object can assume in our mind images more expressive than language could represent; it is thus that the naïve visions of "believers" have taken more esthetic shape than could be conceived by the brain of an artist under the influence of

any much sought-for Ideal: in short, it is thus that the mystic representation, elaborated to the maximum of mental energy, is found to be at once nearer to pure idea than to any expression dialectically conceived, and more full of life than any fictile efforts of Art.

But no attempt must be made to reproduce the mystic apparition. It is in the highest degree subjective, and the marvellous arrangement of these elements, which are themselves common to every imagination, is not at the mercy of any exterior will. No one outside the consciousness in which the idea, the intention, the revealed dogma has unfolded itself, may dream of doing more than participate in the intelligible consequences of the vision; possibly the consequences are more valuable than the vision itself, which has only the condition of intelligibility; possibly no one could give to himself such representations.

Is mystic vision only a natural phenomenon? This cannot, in any case, be the sole conclusion derived from what has just been said. Could the human mind give to itself, all at once, such might of Imagination and Reason as to enable it to hold conscious communion with the Absolute in paths beyond the dialectical; and, above all, could it bring to us, as tokens of this extraordinary communication, deeds which, as Maudsley says, compel the admiration of all men of heart?

II. At the point we have reached, is it still worth while to discuss the non-objectiveness of mystic symbols?

In such a discussion the governing principle must be the one established by Saint Augustine: "*That which is*

*divine is the thing signified, and not the sign.*"[1] It is peculiarly fitting that we should take our authority from Saint Augustine, both because he was influenced by the naïve opinion then prevailing in regard to the objective reality of visions, and because he expresses very clearly that the question was completely indifferent, so far as the truth and dignity of the Revelations were concerned. "Between the supernatural action (objective reality of the signs) and the purely mental fact, there is this difference, that the one provokes astonishment and arouses thought, while the other arouses thought without provoking astonishment. In both cases the thought might be the same, but the means by which it is signified are different. It is as though we should write the name of the Lord once with gold and once with ink; the one matter is precious and the other is vile, and yet that which is represented remains identically the same. . . . Write the name of man in letters of gold and the name of God in letters of ink, and then you will perceive how little this difference in material matters in regard to the object itself which concerns our intelligence."[2] Apparitions and other mystic phenomena exist only in the mind of the Seer, but they lose none of their truth or value on that account.

Distinction between the objectiveness of mystic phenomena and the verity of symbols.

The question of objectivity must be clearly stated before we go any further. We do not understand it in its ontological sense of "existence," but in the sense of "somatic reality," or "corporeity."

[1] *De Trinitate*, lib. iii.: Oper. t. iii., p. 108.
[2] *Ibid.*

What is the essential separation to be established between the intelligible and the sensible? The fundamental activity of things, whence comes the impulse that we respond to by invariable intuitions, and the indefinable noumenon which reaches the "Heart" analogically, are they perhaps Being, together and inseparable? And hence, would there not be as much of "being" at the root of symbols as beneath phenomena? Indeed, very much more; for phenomenal being, the actual is posited in the consciousness by a series of facts so successive that we never hold "the same," while beneath the symbols that which we hold is the identical and the permanent, if it is anything. We are no longer apprehending "facts" but "principles" when we penetrate through the symbolic appearances to the consciousness of the Duty and the Power which together bear the name of the "Absolute."

But we are not just now considering the objectivity of symbols in this sense. In ordinary language, when we are not dealing with abstractions we call "object" *that which remains at the disposition of our senses,* after perception as it was before. The word is thus synonymous with "body." And in this sense it is not possible to attribute objectivity to the mystic phenomena of visions, voices, etc. Such impossibility is logical and therefore strict, admitting no mitigation.

No matter what special system may seem satisfactory to us, — spiritualism, materialism, monism, etc., there can be but *three ontological terms* in the sight of Reason: the Consciousness, the World, and the Absolute. The mystic

thesis must not under any pretext exceed this ontological division of first principles, or else it falls of itself. There would be merely a contradiction and no miracle in saying that that which is not "the world" acts upon us by organic impressions as the world does; the same would be then logically both "object" and "not object."

III. It seems to us idle to insist further on the non-objectivity of mystic visions. Let any one take for example the account of the vision of Mamre [1] as commented on by Saint Augustine. There is none more illustrious in the history of religions, and yet nowhere could be found a keener feeling of the externality of the images appearing, the seer telling us that "he walked with the Vision," that "he washed the feet of the angels," etc. This Bible text would be simply a naïve defiance of all the laws of intelligibility were we to persist in understanding it in its objective sense. But if we interpret it according to the experiences already abundant and scientific which have cleared up the questions of "mental vision" and "hallucination" it becomes easy, and the religious symbolism shines forth pure and noble in these pages, whose beautiful simplicity is only surpassed by their psychological exactness. When we approach this same recital from a point of view which is general and not in any wise exegetic, where Maudsley explains how an idea can create such hallucinations that automatic facts flow from them naturally,[2] we shall then be

Non-objectiveness of mystic phenomena.

[1] Gen. xviii.

[2] The idea of the movement is truly the movement in the innermost; it is the current of nervous action which when transmitted along the proper nerves will become the external movement. — MAUDSLEY, *Physiologie de l'esprit*, pp. 271, 273.

surrounding a mystic event with evidence, whereas, by clinging to the letter it could never be explained objectively, nor find a place in history as such.

What are we to think of a middle state, half-way between subjectiveness and objectiveness, which the Christian commentators have so often mentioned? "Appearances are sometimes produced by means of a special creation, and when once the vision is ended, the creation vanishes."[1] Motives of exegesis only could have induced Saint Augustine, and following him Saint Thomas, to task themselves with such commentaries.[2] We reject them, not only because such provisional "creations" are counter to scientific determinism, but over and above all on account of logical necessity, and in order not to transgress the very principle of identity. That which has no existence either in the world or in the consciousness is neither object nor subject; why endeavor to conceive some middle term between these two modes of existence? Mystics have been conscious in their minds of "a dove" of "flames," "solar rays,"[3] etc., but do not

[1] Saint Augustine, *De Trinitate*, i., ii. ch. vii., cf. *ib.* i., iii. ch. x. and St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, p. 1, q. clxxi.–clxxiv.

[2] "Non ex nostro sensus dicimus . . . nec provectu mentis comprehendere valeo." (St. Aug. *De Trin.*, i., ii., ch. vii.)

[3] *De Trin.* i., ii., ch. vi. "Verbum caro factum est. . . . Non ergo sic assumpta est creatura in quâ apparuit Spiritus sanctus sicut assumpta est caro illa. . . . Neque enim columbam beatificavit Spiritus, vel illum flatum, vel illum ignem. . . . Sed apparuerunt ista sicut opportuni apparere debuerunt creaturâ serviente Creatori. . . . Non possumus dicere Spiritum Sanctum et Deum et columbam nec sicut dicimus Filium et Deum et hominem nec sicut dicimus Filium Agnum Dei, Joanne Evangelistâ vidente Agnum occisum in Apocalypsi. Illa quippe visio prophetica non est exhibita oculis corporeis per formas corporeas sed in spiritu per spiritales imagines corporum. Columbam vero illam et ignem oculis viderunt quicumque viderunt: quanquam de igne disputare potest utrum

all such appearances reduce themselves to elements already possessed by and present in the consciousness? Mystic action addresses itself to the soul only, and has no other tendency than to introduce it into certain regions of the beyond, where our nature, moral and free, may have interests which are more than contingent. There is therefore no logical authority whereby we can attribute objective reality to symbols, whatever they may be and under whatever circumstances they may have been historically produced; on the other hand, the whole Reason proclaims the contrary. Had the cosmic elements, as is claimed, been set in motion aside from all natural determination, and simply for the purpose of bringing "appearances" before the consciousness, we should have to acknowledge that these "spiritual bodies," and "subjective objects" would have interfered with the conditioned order of phenomena without introducing anything into the order of higher verities which could not have come in through mere imagination. It could not be admitted that, in order to procure these verities for man, God had been forced to make himself the creator of illusions in the order of reality.

Does not Saint Augustine himself use the same argument when he sets out to prove, against the Manichæans, that the body of Christ was material and veritable? "When the devil tempted Christ what was it that he said? Will you

oculis an spiritu visus sic propter verba sic posita. Non enim ait 'viderunt linguas divisas velut ignem,' sed 'visæ sunt eis.' (Act. Apost. ii. 3.) Non autem sub eâdem significatione solemus dicere 'visum est mihi' qua dicimus 'vidi.'" (*Tr. de Trinitate*, i., ii., ch. vi.) These last lines show well upon what slender bases the objective interpretation of symbols rests. Exegesis which has to resort to such methods is no longer an aid to Faith, but a peril.

say that Christ showed himself with a human body but did not really have one? Madmen that you are! Rather than admit that God spoke with the Devil, you prefer to believe that God *lied* to the Devil? *If there was no real body what was it then that was manifest to human and corporeal gaze? Was it only the apparition of a lie?* The very thought is blasphemy."[1] This reflection, it seems, should have inspired exegesis long before, and should have inclined it more generally to accept the subjectivity of mystic phenomena.[2]

Of mystic Hallucination.

IV. We must not be shocked by the word "hallucination" any more than by the word "alienation." The substance of revelations preserves all its integrity whatever the mental mechanism by which revelations have been wrought. Mystic representations are given to the consciousness when in the intense state, and it is just that which answers to the word "alienation." The mind does not pass regularly from the weak state of imagination to the intense state, except by means of presentation, that

[1] *De diversis sermo*, xvi., *contra Manichæos*, ch. ix., x.

[2] It is only out of curiosity that we stop for a moment over the distinction which Saint Augustine uses in this same connection, to show that Angels could produce "substantial appearances" without being guilty of falsehood. "The matter which they assume," says he, "was not human flesh; but it was 'true' because they assumed it in one of those 'celestial bodies' which God had simply entrusted to them to guard." (*De diversis sermo, ib.*) This property which the Angels have in such a portion of universal matter (a conception of ages more naïve than our own) is not even worth as much as the usual scholastic subtletics. A moral relation of protection, or even an efficient causality which performs the office of substantial form, and a matter which becomes, as such only, the true body of the agent which gives it external motion, are inventions which the mystic genius would never have produced had it kept itself free from all thought of things foreign to infinite love, and pure from that spirit afterwards called "scholastic."

is to say, under the stimulus of the things themselves; when this happens in another manner and the mind is firmly convinced that it perceives something given only within itself, whatever may be the cause, we are compelled to see in it an "alienation" and a certain reversal of consciousness.

We cannot completely omit from this study, nor dwell at any length upon, questions of physiology which are connected with Mysticism. Theologians as well as physiologists have no hesitation in classing the state of mystic consciousness among the facts called by the former *alienatio mentis*, and by the latter, "hallucinations."[1] At the same time every one knows perfectly well that the facts so qualified have not the same pathological significance. Sleep is a case of normal alienation, and another case of normal alienation is the state of fixed attention or *mono-ideism*. Morbid cases come from disturbance of the mental vision in consequence of organic lesions, paralysis, fevers, etc. Saint Augustine in a similar classification distinguishes the case of the mystic state from all others, and can find no other cause to assign to it than "the mingling of a spirit of good or evil with our mental life."[2] Whatever the opinion may be of such causality, it must be allowed that the fact itself has nevertheless been defined by the same author in terms which are perfectly exact: "The alienation takes place when purely internal images ex-

[1] It is all confined to an alienation, in the etymological sense, of certain states of consciousness which the ego does not consider as its own, but which it objectivates and finally, by placing it outside itself, ends by attributing an actual existence independent of its own. — RIBOT, *Les maladies de la personnalité*, p. 110.

[2] *De Genesi ad litteram*, l. xii., ch. xii.

press themselves in our minds with the same vividness as though the objects themselves were present to our eyes, and in such a way that we confound them with our sensations." [1]

In the first place, like Saint Augustine, we must limit the mystic fact exclusively to cases of hallucination produced under two conditions: first, in a waking state; second, under some influence not organic.[2] Thus the mystic fact comes under the case of *mono-ideism.*

The experimental study of the nervous system has led to discoveries, which we hope will be followed by many others, but it may be said that our acquired knowledge has so far only confirmed Mr. Charles Richet's observation regarding the entire possibility of the occurrence of normal hallucinations in perfectly sane individuals: "Although we oftenest encounter hallucinations among the insane (and I am speaking of complete hallucination of sight, hearing, and touch), this psychic phenomenon is not unlikely to occur exceptionally in the case of the absolutely normal. As classic authors have observed, *between the mental image and complete hallucination there is a whole series of gradual transitions: and the boundary line between a very strong mental image and a very vague hallucination is not possible to trace.* If we succeed, then, in demonstrating that the normal state of undoubtedly sound minds sometimes admits of complete hallucination,

[1] *De Genesi ad litteram,* l. xii., ch. xii. This definition has nothing to lose by comparison with the very best. Parchappe's definition of hallucination is "a state of soul in which pure imaginings are reproduced spontaneously in the consciousness with all the characteristics of the actual sensations."

[2] *Ibid.*

we shall have furnished *the most probable* explanation of apparitions." [1]

We must look, therefore, for these "gradual transitions" which establish perfect progressive continuity between the "mental image" conceived by a sound and intelligent mind, and the "hallucination" which may occur in the same mind to the great profit of knowledge or the moral life. We have records of the mental deterioration brought on by drunkenness, hysteria, and other causes which lay waste our nervous force, and they cannot be made too complete in order that we may learn the cure. But there ought to be also the history of morally opposite cases, which yet resemble the others in their character of taking exclusive possession of the functions of "relation" so called. "Eloquence, poetic genius, and every faculty transcending human mediocrity, all represent under different names that "destructive, tyrannical power which brings everything under subjection and which does not permit the reception of ideas except in one single direction." [2] Now, it is this very same power which we must unhesitatingly regard as the productive cause of states of consciousness properly mystic.

While the phenomena of hallucination are taking place, whatever the influence that produces them, our nervous resources are drained and the organism becomes exhausted with fatigue; but the very knowledge of the identity of physiological effect enables us to understand better the

[1] *Revue Philos.* septembre, 1885, t. xx. p. 334, 335. "From the idea to hallucination," says Taine, "there is no greater distance than from that of the germ to complete vegetable or animal life." (*De l'intelligence*, t. ii. p. 25.)

[2] Ribot, *Psychologie de l'Attention*, p. 117.

psychological opposition of the determining causes of the hallucination. Life is a power of cohesion, both organic and intellectual; this vital identity, which we have attempted to express in the word "Idea-Force," is specially apparent in the mental act. The normal condition of life is the state of external perception. Let it happen that Life does not reach that degree, and that the "Idea" is arrested at the state of incoherent images; or let it happen that the "Idea," too intensely concentrative of the consciousness, leads it beyond its successive and space representations; in each case there will be hallucination. But what difference between the two modes of mental process! "The one," says Mr. Ribot, "is an *evolution*, and tends *towards the more;* the other is a *dissolution*, and tends *towards the less*. In hallucination through Idea, the dominating emotion comes from the active personality, and Reason, by means of attention, dominates the organic disturbances. The contrary takes place in pathological hallucinations: the consciousness is confused because Reason has ceased to belong to itself, and has no longer any active part in the ego, but not on account of a fortuitous alienation of mental images. The cause of this second class of hallucinations must always be looked for in some defect of personality, some moral alienation of the ego, either originating in the subject or inherited.

The various mystic phenomena may all be regarded as cases of mono-ideism, the processus of which is generally the following: Under a moral influence (of which we shall treat in the third part of this work) mental representations originate in the consciousness, and quickly assume the active

state of "impressions." If the influence endures, the impression is heightened and the subject enters upon a state of normal hallucination which Mr. Binet distinguishes from others as being of "central origin." [1] "Ideas" become then really what they are etymologically, εἴδη, "visions." But this word must not be restricted to representations purely and properly "visual," for the whole consciousness is occupied with the mystic fact, and there is not a psychic element which may not be contributory. Thus "voices" are often blended with "images" and form an integral part of the mystical "vision," thus contradicting the assertion that such things can be nothing but "impulses of the language function." [2]

It is well to insist in all this upon the characteristic most distinctive of mystic mentality: it is reflection, and not abstraction. When the mind withdraws into itself for the mystic act, instead of applying itself as in the logical process to the extinct representations (for no others enter into the synthesis of conceptions), it appeals to the Absolute, "with all its strength," morally, mentally, etc.,[3] and everything which appears in response to this appeal of love, it orders within itself not in concepts but living and in symbols, and without other organic bond than the infinitely free analogies of mystic Desire. The symbols which arise in this manner absorb the consciousness, as happens during efforts of abstrac-

[1] *Revue philos.* loc. cit. pp. 473, 474. Maudsley says the same thing, but without the same scientific precision. Cf. *Physiologie de l'esprit*, p. 254.

[2] Dr. Max Simon, *Lyon médical*, 1880, Nos. 48, 49.

[3] "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (Mark xii. 30.)

tion: but, in a manner the inverse of concepts, instead of drawing further within to the summit of the consciousness, they still occupy the imagination and the sensibility by acts which appertain no longer to a life of relations, but which have nevertheless an object proper to them, immanent in the consciousness. This may still be called "mono-ideism," if we choose, but under condition of not forgetting that here the "Idea" is the "Absolute." [1] The mystic object is expressed analogically only in the Imagination, but its presence is sufficient to imprint on the feelings and the will original impressions of pleasure, love, or desire, of which mystical narrations give abundant testimony.

V. As sequence to these general considerations, we must speak in particular of prophetic dreams, ecstasies, and other phenomena which have such an important place in the history of Mysticism.

The various mystic phenomena: the prophetic Dream, Voices, the Stigmata, Ecstasy.

Dreams have often been considered as supernatural events. In our opinion three natural causes are responsible for the mystic importance of dreams: first, the absolute liberty of the imagination during sleep; second, the alienation of the personality; third, the freedom of the intellectual power from all organic interference.

A dream is, by definition, the purely molecular function of motion of the brain. The opposition of external and internal perceptions constitutes the waking state, and when

[1] "The tendency to motion is at its minimum with regard to abstract ideas. Such ideas being representations, pure schema, the motor element is weakened in the same proportion as the representative element." (Ribot, *Maladies de la Volonté*, p. 132.) The effect of symbols is absolutely different.

the external perception is absent, there is nothing but memory and imagination, without any sense of reality. The facts of duplication of the ego during dreams may be thus explained. In a state of sleep we can maintain a dialogue with ourselves, and assume the part of several persons, just as we can in the waking state, and indeed even more vividly. In the consciousness of a person who is asleep, a certain number of sub-conscious sensations or purely internal images dominate, and finally reach the point of constituting, with relation to the others, a "real world" as it were; but at the same time there arise from the depths of the imagination representations not so vivid, which mingle with the dominant group, in about the same proportion that images mingle with sensations in the waking state. The subject is thus exposed to a complex alienation, and to a duplication of the ego several times repeated.

What shall be said of the condition of Reason during dreams? Dreams which occur in the depths of slumber have special importance, according to certain authors, the soul being at that time most set free from all organic influence, and consequently the intuition more intellectual. "Is there a faculty of perception," says Saint Augustine, "independent of the senses, which, acting by means of an internal organ, is enabled to give us completer knowledge than ordinary experience?"[1] He does not venture to pronounce on the question. At this deep stratum of slumber, may it be that there is some transcendent state of consciousness, or rather some unconscious activity, productive of more subtle intui-

[1] *De Gen. ad litt.* ch. xii. Cf. *De immortalitate animæ*, ch. xiv.

tions than could be obtained by prolonged attention? These are bold hypotheses, which would tend to give dreams a higher value than natural and acquired knowledge, and upon them might be built a shadowy mysticism akin to superstition.

It would remain to be learned, however, whether the moral influence, which we consider the principle of all the mystic determinations of consciousness, could be exercised during sleep, or (which comes to the same thing) whether the will is not always completely inactive during the state of hypnotic alienation. It is our opinion that automatic cerebration does not go so far as to absolutely cut off all relations between Freedom and the dream representations. "The power of will," says Mr. Ribot, "is not always completely suspended." [1] Now, however small the part may be which is thus left for Freedom, it is enough to enable the Absolute to enter the consciousness, and in certain cases the conclusions which are derived from the hypnotic vision are worth preserving as moral or intellectual acquisitions. It would be enough indeed by which to justify to criticism such famous mystic dreams as have lasted, the historic value of which it is not our affair to investigate.[2]

Without contradicting any of the scientific explanations which may have been given on the same subject, we can say that everything is not entirely given over to inco-ordination in the consciousness during the dream. What is the influence that causes a general idea to return to us again and again in

[1] *Psychol. de l'Attention*, pp. 157–159.

[2] Cf. Maimonide, *Le livre des Egarés*, ch. xxxvi., where it is said that "dreams are the abortive fruit of Prophecy."

hypnotic representations, or which causes the often eloquent discussions which go on within, and the enacting of dramas by no means devoid of epic grandeur? Maudsley, who has recognized this fact, speaks of "the plastic power of the mind," [1] and as he makes an express distinction between this "power" and the organic association of ideas, it must be that the imagination remains during sleep under the power of some super-organic cause which he does not name, and which for ourselves we are unable to distinguish from "Reason."

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In reading accounts of mystical events we notice that Prophecy is often said to be "spoken" in the soul of Seers. Are we to understand by this some other mode of communication than by Symbols? No; Mr. Egger in his work on "Inner Speech" [2] distinguishes in a very subtle manner the vivid form which speech sometimes assumes in the consciousness, very unlike the beginnings of spoken expression which are the automatic accompaniment of nearly all our conceptions. In these cases of "vivid" speech, it is as though a representation literally bursts into the consciousness, and the author seems to class the phenomenon of "Inspiration" among those events which throw the soul out of the peaceful current of its thoughts. He enumerates three cases: the in-

[1] "The point I wish to insist on is the tendency which ideas have to reunite in a mental representation. . . . This is not merely an association of ideas . . . but we have something additional to deal with, a constructive power by which not only ideas are related to each other, but give rise to new productions." (*Physiologie de l'Esprit*, p. 17.)

[2] *La parole intérieure*, ch. iii.

terior speech of "passion," that speech we all recognize, which mounts with such violence to lips and eyes the instant the emotions are more than ordinarily touched; the interior speech of the "imagination," which we form with art and not without effort, in order to represent dramatically all that is susceptible of an esthetic character; and lastly, the interior speech of "morals." Had the author not had in mind exactly what we wish to express here by mystic symbolism he would not have given such examples of this kind of speech as "the dæmon of Socrates" and "the voices of Jeanne d'Arc." Voices, by themselves alone, never constitute a mystic fact; they are heard in the soul of seers at times when the symbols assume such intensity as to detach themselves from the rest of the consciousness, like distinct, dramatic personalities.

It is easy to understand why Theology has assigned the first rank among all mystic phenomena to those which accompany "inner voices." [1] When the mystic sense detaches itself in so striking a manner from the symbols that it seems to *re-echo* in the consciousness, like speech, and the seer has only to listen to the discourse directly spoken by the Vision, in order to interpret it to himself and to others, the maximum of expression and the perfection of symbolism is reached. There is nothing more then to be desired, except that the mystic character of the "voices," I mean their inwardness, shall not be misunderstood, either by the seers themselves or by those to whom it is declared. Would Jeanne d'Arc have been the purely Inspired one cherished

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* q. clxxiv., a. 3, corp. a.

by our patriotism if the voices which she called with so much candor "my voices" had evinced any external signs, and had not proceeded from the Absolute which is "within us only"? Whence could they spring, except from that spiritual fount, closed to all reactions from the world of sense, where, without witnesses of any kind, God and Freedom meet? Saint Augustine very justly remarks that the prophet Zechariah, when he is relating his angelic vision, uses the term, *loquebatur in me;* in the same sense Jeanne d'Arc said, "my voices." The prophet Zechariah thus speaks: *Et dixit mihi qui loquebatur in me.*[1] It is not to be supposed that the words struck the auditive organ of the prophet, for he specially says, *loquebatur in me,* and not *ad me.* Were these inner words similar to the sounds which come to the imagination when we realize our ideas or when we sing within ourselves? Yes, similar no doubt, but with the difference that the words seemed to him to issue from the Angel to whose suggestion he was subject.[2] Unfortunately this case of certainty of interpretation is only one gleam through the fogs of ancient exegesis, and it rests here upon a felicitous grammatical subtlety.

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What is Ecstasy? The mystic consciousness has explained this phenomenon naïvely, as alone it knew how; and in these accounts, we find, of critical interest to us: (1) that under the mystic influence the mental representations become more and more stripped of empirical conditions; (2) that, in the same proportion, the mind seems "to withdraw into itself;"

[1] Zech. i. 9. [2] Epist. ci.

(3) that the sense of externality finally becomes entirely absent, so that the consciousness is completely wiped out in that respect, or at least, none of the rest of the ecstasy subsists in the memory.

What we would specially remark is the interesting struggle between the mystic consciousness striving to accomplish itself by grasping pure Being, and the natural conditions of Knowing which do not admit that the consciousness shall do without "representations." Saint Augustine makes this observation in regard to the vision of Moses in Mount Sinai [1] and the rapture of Saint Paul.[2] Moses is absorbed by the divine presence: and the inwardness of the Symbols becomes so great that at a certain moment the familiarity and intimate conversation seem all there is of the divine Being: *Sic modificabatur tanquam esset amici loquentis ad amicum.*[3] But yet, at the same time, the sense of all that remained between the purely intelligible divine substance and the representation, still symbolical, manifested to him was such anguish to the soul of the Seer that he burst forth into sighs. "Show me yourself that I may see you clearly." [4] Saint Augustine adds: "Moses knew that he had then a vision that was still only material, and he entreated to receive the spiritual vision of God, which is the true one. This spoken symbol had something which gave it all the marks of intercourse between friends. "But who can see God with his bodily eyes?" [5]

[1] Ex. xxxiii.
[2] 2 Cor. xii. 1–6.
[3] *De Trin.* i. ii. ch. xviii.
[4] "And he said, I beseech thee show me thy glory." (Ex. xxxiii.)
[5] *De Trin.* loc. cit.

We might explain in the same way, without divergence from the Christian Doctor, but using more precise terms, the three heavens which Saint Paul speaks of.[1] The passage from the ordinary state of consciousness (the state of exterior perception) to the symbolic conception is the ascent to the second heaven. And if we could succeed in penetrating further than the symbols of the imagination, in the same way that we have gotten beyond the gross forms of reality, we should be in contact with that intelligible world where dwells the essence of things; but at the same time we should be placing ourselves outside the conditions of existence; and nothing is truer than the Biblical expression: "*No man shall see me and live.*"[2] Every case of ecstasy whether of the Alexandrian lost in the abstraction of the "One" and "Being," or of mystic *seers*, ends always alike in unconsciousness. The intelligence, having reached the limits of the defined or figured bounds of things, and already filled with its object, aspires to penetrate further and grasp pure being; powerless it falls back to things below.

In ecstasy, as in the dream, there is "alienation" and the organic state is *deficient*. But the conditions of inner perception are not the same in the two cases. During natural sleep the vital depression comes spontaneously; and because the conscious force, the *intentio animi*, is not able *any longer* to remain tense, it withdraws into the cerebral folds, where the images acquired during the waking state are condensed. On the contrary, in the state of ecstatic mono-ideism, the

[1] *De Genesi ad litteram*, i. xii. ch. i. ii. iii. xviii. xxiv. xxxvii.

[2] Ex. xxxiii. 20.

mind remains tense, and when it withdraws from the organs of external perception, it is not to drift about in the middle strata, at the mercy of molecular currents, but to fix itself in the nervous centres, where the acts of ideation are to be accomplished.

The moment when, in the eyes of the subject, the thought ceases to originate in the subject announces a change in the ordinary mental process; it is the change which is expressed by duplication of the personality. "This situation seems to me," says Mr. Ribot, "the absolute confiscation of mental activity by one single idea (positive for mystics, negative for empiricists), but an idea which, from its high degree of abstractness and its absence of all limit or determination, excludes all individual feeling."[1] In ordinary cases of monoideism, the personality is never suddenly dispossessed, as it often happens under the mystic influence; in such cases, in order to produce the ecstasy the attention needs to fix itself for a longer time, and perhaps receive some artificial aid. For this and other reasons the "alienatio mentis" spoken of by Saint Augustine, and after him by Saint Thomas, must not be confounded with the efforts of philosophic abstraction. Efforts to conceive the Absolute rationally tend to suppress imagination and feeling, rather than to heighten them; and we have learned that they lead us to an Infinite which, qualitatively, is the most meagre of all our concepts. The mystic consciousness, on the contrary, is set in motion in every part of it by Desire; representations pour in to render

[1] *Les maladies de la personnalité*, pp. 134, 135.

the absolute present and "felt;" and if it comes to lose the sense of its own identity, it is through an excess of imagination desiring to express the Infinite by the most vivid synthesis of images, and not by slow elimination of concepts.

In the mystic state, is the personality diminished? The question would be whether we may not attribute to the fact of "alienation" a sense other than pathological, or whether it may not rather be considered in the sense of something added to life, and an increase of personality. We think, not only that rational progress has indefinite possibilities, but that there is no *absolute* reason why it should not come by means of "alienation;" that is, by enhancement along more vital and sensitive lines than by the ordinary modes of evolution. Let us be permitted to formulate on this subject "a simple intellectual supposition," in the language of Kant, "without other pretensions than that of anticipating contrary hypotheses." Could we suddenly introduce the Reason of a man into the consciousness of a child, is there any doubt, in the first place, that the effect called by physiologists and Christian authors alike "alienatio mentis" would occur, and in the second place, that such an event would be looked upon as a "progress"? The child, suddenly virilized, would feel himself dominated by something *still himself, but also much stronger than himself.* Reason could not fail to recognize that it was greater in the sum of experiences and concepts suddenly found in the consciousness, and in default of other identity a very lively sense of personality would join in it the present to the past, so closely as to form but one and the same spirit. We might make the same supposition with

regard to character. Let us imagine what would occur if the finely susceptible moral sense of a man practised in all virtue should be actualized, without any preparation, in the consciousness of a man steeped in falsehood and selfishness. Nothing could be more appropriate than the term "alienation," and yet no greater progress to the better could be imagined. Though changes may be very rapid in the order of phenomena, they can never be anything but successive and in mathematical continuity; but things of the moral order do not come under this law. They are not in space, nor are they effected in Time. Therefore the Progress which goes from the same to the same has no laws. It is Evolution, or the passage *from the same to the other,* which has laws.

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The power of the soul over the body, of the Idea over Life, is more strikingly evident in the facts which the history of Mysticism presents than in any which we have been studying. The mystic object has sometimes been expressed, not alone in the Imagination, but in the very flesh of the Seers. We shall make no lengthy physiological comments on the subject: nothing is more comprehensible than that "unity of action" by which we may suppose that Life, while weaving the warp of our cellular tissue and the web of our mental images, should assume, under certain influences, the very forms of the imagination and trace them in the body of a Seer. But on this subject we prefer to let a veritable mystic speak for himself. Concerning the celebrated stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi, a mystic writer of the same name,

Saint Francis de Sales, speaks as follows: "This soul, therefore, so touched, so softened, and as it were melted by loving sorrow (for the Passion), was thus all disposed to receive impressions and the marks of love from its supreme lover. The memory was almost obliterated in the recollection of this divine love, and the imagination wholly bent on representing to itself the wounds and bruises which the eyes were seeing at that moment in a perfectly clear and present image; the understanding lost in the occupation of receiving the infinitely active species which the imagination was presenting; and lastly, love was bending its whole strength of will to comply with and conform to the Passion of the Well-Beloved, so that the very soul no doubt was transformed into a second crucifix. Then the soul, as form and mistress of the body, using its power over the body, imprinted on it the sorrowful wounds which had wounded its lover just as he had suffered them. *Love is very wonderful that it can so sharpen the imagination as to penetrate through all to the outermost.* It was love, then, that made the internal torments of the great lover, Saint Francis, pass to the external, and wounded the body with the same piercing dart of sorrow with which it had wounded the heart."[1] We could ill afford to lose such explanations as these, nor do we need to add anything to them. They confirm, to the utmost, our opinion of the subjectivity of mystic phenomena.

[1] *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, i. vi. ch. xv.

## § IV. — DEGRADED FORMS OF MYSTICISM

I. Criterion of Mysticism. Occultism.
II. Perversions of Mystic Symbolism.
III. Mystic Infatuation.
IV. Pessimism and Mysticism.

I. The human mind cannot allow itself to trust in mysticism without a triple guard: (1) its point of departure must be a purely moral desire, for we can expect no transcendence over ourselves upon any other side than that of Freedom; (2) the *symbolic* character of our relations with the Absolute must be honestly recognized, which means that the belief in the direct intuition of a divine universal and infinite essence must be renounced; (3) nothing which contradicts natural knowledge, or experience reduced to concepts by Reason, must have expression mystically; for our mind could only fall below itself, instead of rising above itself, by negation of any of its essential principles. Every time that a man has sought for transcendence over his natural knowledge or power, outside these conditions, there has been nothing to record but loss for his Reason and for his well-being. The history of such abuses is long, as it is lamentable.

Criterion of Mysticism. Occultism.

Under the name of "Occultism" may be grouped all the systems which have a common tendency to seek in Nature for manifestations of the Absolute. The stars and the birds, removed from us in space, have long been tempting objects for this instinct of mystic Naturalism, and have given rise to the most obstinate forms of superstition. A less gross

belief has been that the psychic force dwells outside the individual life, not only as free and thinking subject, but in persistent relations of causality and immanence with the empirical world. Subtle manifestations of "spirits" have been sought therefore with mystic avidity, and it was believed that the moment had come to popularize that strange art of "conversing with the dead." A certain number of people of leisure still occupy themselves with this pursuit; but as yet they have not offered us any experience sufficiently positive to justify rational criticism. There is still quite a number of phenomena (telepathic communications, cures by suggestion, etc.) which psychology and physiology each claim as their own, and which must not be too hastily interpreted in the sense of a super-empirical intervention. Do they come under the term of occultism? Towards all these events Mysticism must keep firm to the principles we have just enounced, but, on the other hand, Empiricism should bring a broader Reason to bear in criticising them. We are not in possession scientifically of the laws of life, and still less so of the ultimate conditions of thought; and these "psycho-mystic" facts, these appearances of spiritual autonomy take place at a boundary point between the Life which we know so imperfectly and Freedom, which has nothing empirical about it. Should Determinism succeed in course of time in bringing them within the tables of its prevision, it would assuredly be the supreme triumph of science and the end here below of all wonder.

But the Mysticism which we have in view has nothing at all in common with mere wonder or curiosity; it has no

impulse towards the Absolute to discover "the new," but its impulse is to discover "the better." The true field of Mysticism is the Infinite of Reason and Freedom. Our minds carry in themselves the laws native to them of Duty and Perfection, not empirical laws; under the guarantee of absolute obedience to these laws, or rather by virtue of its own moral autonomy, there is no novelty which can astonish Mysticism. It can no more be "shocked scientifically" than it is susceptible of the vulgar forms of wonder; the sense of the "Possible" which is the honor and life of Reason is really *latent faith*, an unavowed sense of the Infinite.

Perversions of Mystic Symbolism.

II. Even if we leave out of the question facts which have no mystic bearing because, instead of a moral interest, they show only superstition for the Unknown, we shall still find that Mysticism, though true in its tendencies, has often fallen below itself through error or imperfect interpretation. It is this evil which Pascal complains of: "The Jews have so much loved the things figured . . . that they have undervalued the reality."[1] "The things figured" are the symbols; "the reality" is the object which they express to the Reason, or rather the impulse which they impress on the will.

It is necessary in Symbolism to make a precise estimate of the value of the representative elements. In fact, we have already seen that their value is null, and that images do nothing but make up for our inability to grasp "things in themselves." From the point of view of Absolute Good and Truth, it would be better if there were no symbols at

[1] *Pensées*, art. xv. 5.

all. We derive a twofold consequence from this principle: (1) logically, that it is an error to regard Voices, Images, etc., as objective; (2) morally, that it is a superstition to attribute any excellence to these figurative elements, that is, to the species of the vision or of the sacrament. Unfortunately we do not conquer without difficulty this twofold tendency to remove truth and holiness from their true seat, and see them in the elements under which they appear to us. We forget all the time that truth belongs exclusively to concepts and to propositions which can be logically stated, and not to the unreal symbol; we forget too that holiness is a state even more fundamental than intelligence, and that phenomena never enter into it. In this way it has happened that human weakness has tried unconsciously to create a contradictory essence, midway between symbols and the Infinite, and has persisted in it; as though the character of "sacred" could thus float outside of all subjectivity, detached both from the Absolute and from Freedom.

Unless we bring careful attention and some moral excellence into mystic acts, we risk falling into the disorders which philosophy has justly condemned under the names of Anthropomorphism and Fanaticism. Caprice and egotism may easily take the place of mystic desire, and instead of raising our Freedom to God in triumphant self-abnegation, the ego may use perverted symbolic suggestions to exalt the self and to carry it to the extremes of evil and passion. It has constantly been observed that the mystic state is an object of desire and ambition for all the passions. They are themselves intense states of the imagination and the whole soul,

and as they seek place in consciousness irrationally, they easily adapt the mystic process by which the Absolute enters the consciousness. The passions "inspire" themselves after their own fashion and translate themselves symbolically into the consciousness so as to take entire possession of it, and succeed thus in procuring a subtle intoxication not to be obtained in simple every-day life, nor by the natural use of the imagination.

III. More frequently it occurs that symbols coming from without, and not arising in the consciousness by direct illumination peculiar to the subject himself, fail to find adequate interpretation, and in this case the intelligence is really injured thereby. It has been said that the man with none but clear ideas would be a fool. Certainly Mysticism could not deserve this reproach, for considered in itself, its precise object is to procure for us at times certain unverifiable representations in which we refresh our intellectual sense of the Infinite, and from which our Freedom drinks, with a vital faith which is impervious to evil. But on the other hand, there is such a source of confusion in misconceived symbols that it would be better perhaps to have none but the clear ideas which content "the fool." While truly sane eyes always perceive a beyond to clear perceptions and strive to extend the field of evidence for their own vision, by that attention which is pure love and pure desire, it often happens when minds of mediocre calibre absorb a strong taste for mysticism that they interpret the symbols as possessed of intrinsic virtue, and thus endow them only with their own poverty of conception and human egotism. The

Mystic Infatuation.

Undefined, which is the common burden of all who have any care for things beyond their life of every day, has no existence for these false mystics. Having established the ultimate reason of things in helpless images, they are thereby delivered from the task of seeking the better, which is the very foundation and law of Freedom. Let us add that, provided a man has "enough heart," he is always secure from being thus led astray. The symbols of fetishism were at first examples of this. Primitive men (if we are to believe prehistoric data), before they had the power to explain phenomena or to criticise their own concepts, objectivated the Absolute in all things; but in these free symbols some men must even then have cared for the Ideal which is Goodness and Knowledge, while others cared for them to give more force to their passions and invincible consistency to their errors.

IV. Pessimism may be considered as a mystic malady, but it is only inspired and maintained by Mysticism as one of its degraded forms. The vague feeling which takes possession of us when the imagination yields, as it were idly and without any precise reason, to the uniform and ever unfinished representations of Space and Time is not to be confounded with the moral desire and active interest of Mysticism. The Infinite is never posited in the consciousness symbolically or morally in response to researches which are known to be without purpose. It is no doubt the long monotony of such efforts of the imagination and our absolute inability to attain any such comprehension, upon the plane in which we are ideally immersed, which fill the soul with sadness. "In vain do we inflate our concep-

Pessimism and Mysticism.

tions to extend beyond all conceivable space; we shall only bring forth atoms at the price of reality. . . . What is a man in infinity? The eternal silence of infinite space terrifies me." [1] Minds which seek in Mysticism only an answer and diversion from this crushing power of outward things will never find the road by which man really approaches the Infinite. The Pessimism which comes from the Imagination, however, is not so far from the true mystic state as moral Pessimism. The weight of the Universe is crushing no doubt when we become conscious of it, but in order to rise above it, I have but to reflect with Pascal "that I am conscious of it," and through that thought comes a whole new order of things still infinite, but in which, at least, I can advance indefinitely through Reason and Freedom. But if, by misfortune, this inner world falls to pieces, and if a man succeeds in persuading himself that thought itself, with all that depends on it, is only the vainest of phenomena, all is lost. Reason, imprisoned between the Infinite which defies our power of imagination on the outside, and convinced of its own nothingness, no longer having the impulse to rise, falters and falls prostrate.

[1] Pascal, *Pensées*, a l. 1; & a xxv., 17 bis.

# THIRD PART

## THE "HEART"

We must now inquire whence comes the mystic initiative and what is the value of its symbolic creations, — since it appears that the Absolute has no access into the understanding, and that the imagination by itself can introduce nothing positive into the consciousness. There is but one foundation on which to base the symbols, namely: the presence of the Absolute in Freedom. Unless that presence can be first established, without any aid from mystic reasonings, as a human and universal fact, we ought not to tolerate the manifestations of consciousness except within the strict limits of the Understanding; more than this would be false and futile. But if the Absolute is in us as moral necessity or "Postulate," it will still be our duty to demonstrate, in completion of our task, how it is that Freedom unites directly with the Imagination in view of expressing the Absolute in the consciousness. It is this mystic activity which, following the example of Pascal, we shall call "the Heart."

# CHAPTER FIRST

## THE ABSOLUTE AND FREEDOM

### § I. — THE MODERN IDEA OF FREEDOM, AND THE MYSTIC CONCEPTION OF THE DIVINE WILL

I. Subordination of the Reason to "the Heart."

II. Reconciliation of the Kantian notion of Freedom and the Idea of the divine Will through the inwardness of the Good.

III. Reconciliation of Determinism and the Necessity of choice through a positive conception of Freedom.

IV. Holiness and Freedom.

V. The character of supernatural or "divine" comes from the transcendence of the intelligible ego over the empirical ego.

Subordination of the Reason to "the Heart."

I. We have asserted several times, in speaking of the mystic fact, that the Absolute enters the consciousness through Freedom only, and in this sense we interpret Pascal's phrase, "God known of the Heart." In order to make no mistake, it must be thoroughly understood that "the Heart" is nothing else than Freedom considered properly as "power for disinterestedness." When we say the Heart has intuitions, it must not be forgotten that Freedom, whose name recalls its essential function, can only be determined by itself; so that the Heart, after having acquired such intuitions on its own account, must not think of communicating them to others dialectically, nor of attributing worth to them under any such rules as those of Logic. Like Life, the Heart grows

from within only, and this growth consists of things not expressible in concepts and in acts of such a nature as demand wholly renewed expression for each individual.

Is this equivalent to putting the Heart in opposition to the Reason, which has objective and universal expression? By no means. The Heart is Reason as much as it is Freedom, and it would be impossible for it to be absolutely opposed to itself in this twofold aspect. In the judgment of mystics, the Heart is an implicit of Reason and Love, in which those two powers are really subordinate. Desire, which is only the *active* essence of Reason, surpasses in swiftness and energy all process of Dialectics, and is able to give us intuitions which astonish pure Reason.[1] It is the Heart, and never the Reason, which leads us to the Absolute.

The mind is aware of the meaning of the thing which we call, without making any essential distinction, "the Heart" and "Freedom." Between this feeling and our intelligence of the Absolute, we recognize that the distance is great; we believe, however, that the mind without going outside of itself already perceives a transcendence considerable enough to enable it to pass to the idea of the Absolute, without suffering more intellectual violence than there is between having the sense of being free, and truly calling one's self "free." The

[1] We use the word "intuition" in the sense already fixed upon (Second Part, ch. ii. sec. ii.). Kant also proclaimed the superiority of practical Reason over pure Reason, but he makes it expressly understood that it is not "more penetrating view" which is claimed for Reason, "but an extension of its use in another relation." (*Critique de la raison pratique*, pp. 325–328.) We agree with him, but we are seeking also to discover exactly what this "other use of Reason" may be. In our opinion it consists in the production and interpretation of mystic symbols.

inner sense tells us that we are at the same time author and subject of the moral law; it is permissible therefore to say that we have a middle existence between beings not free and beings (if there were such) completely free and not divided like ourselves between physical subjection and moral autonomy.[1] Reason, it is true, dares not look above itself to see so far as this, but while we venture no dogmatic assertions we ask if there is not some effectual way of approaching nearer to pure Freedom, and reaching out to a limit of approximation which we might call hypothetically "Perfection" or "the Absolute." There is but one known way and it is this: As it is by moral Law that man experiences the fact of his Freedom, and through experience of this fact learns his autonomy, so, by advances in morality, that is, by repeated victories of Reason over Sense, man advances towards a condition in which he will no longer have either to resist or yield, but solely *to will* in the happy and tranquil sense of "loving." A man would in this way contract a habit as it were of *reigning* morally within himself, gradually becoming more and more familiar with the idea, which at first was astonishing, of this limit of approximation which we have called "Perfection" or "the Absolute." Such is the sense of these momentous words of Kant: "The moral Law

[1] Whatever opinion may be professed concerning the existence of a Being in itself Goodness and Duty, and transcending motion and desire, the action itself cannot be called contradictory. It has been expressed by Kant in very intelligible terms: "a holy will whose maxims accord of necessity with the laws of autonomy" (*Fond. de la Mét. des Mœurs*, p. 89); and he builds the logical foundation of Personality upon this definition. St. Thomas has said more simply, "Voluntas non hunc solum habet actum, ut appetat quæ non habet, sed etiam, ut amet quæ habet et delectetur in illis." (St. Thomas, p. i., q. xix., a. i. ad. 2 um.)

which is within us exacts from us a disinterested Reverence, reserving the opening of a perspective, very dim truly, of the supra-sensible world, *when only such Reverence has become active and dominant, by this means alone.*" [1]

II. The modern idea of Freedom, which bears the strong impress of Kant's mind, and the mystic concept of the divine Will may be reconciled in like manner with Inspiration and Reason, under condition that both be found again in one and the same fact of our inward being, and that, far from being opposed, they be fused into a distinct whole in some implicit actually present to the consciousness.

Reconciliation of the Kantian notion of Freedom and the idea of the divine Will through the inwardness of the Good.

The middle idea which seems to us to place itself between the externality with which the divine Will is reproached, and the absolute inwardness of the moral Law, is the idea of "the Good." The Kantian system of Morals gets this idea of the Good from the outside only, and fraudulently as it were; in order to find root, however, it must exceed the depths of "Practical Reason." The idea of "the possible" could very well be founded on the principle of Universality, but the idea of Duty could not. How in fact could the imperative spring from the simple consideration "that the act contrary to this imperative would express a contradiction were every one to do it," or again "that nature has given us indefinite faculties for all sorts of possibilities"? [2] Where is

[1] *Crit. de la R. pratique*, p. 370.

[2] *Crit. de la R. prat.*, p. 61. Kant insists at length (*ib.* pp. 220–235) upon the distinctions which the term "the Good," carries with it, and concludes by rejecting this concept as a consequence, and as depending upon, the idea of "Law." This is the point which we venture to dispute.

the necessity of putting into action certain faculties of which we know nothing except that they extend to all and everything? Necessity, as we have seen already, is not to be confounded with universality; it only belongs to the things which have in themselves *Act*, that is to say, a principle *more than formal* whence originates the exigence of universality. The universality of the possible is nothing and can be nothing. We cannot be dispensed therefore from assigning as principle of the Moral Law, an "Act," that is to say, a tendency of the Implicit to make itself explicit. Now this is itself the very definition of the Good.

Sensorial being would limit the Good to its own life and consumes itself completely in this desire. Reasonable being conceives the "universal" Good, of which life is only a slender thread — yet neither Feeling nor Reason can positively demonstrate any object which is "the Good in itself," to which all the rest must relate. Kant was altogether and properly a mystic when he proposed that Reason be its own end, founded upon its proper essence, Right and Duty. Why does Personality confer upon man the radical right, source of all others, to be never taken as a means by other men? With Kant this is neither a calculation of prudence nor a mere sentiment of moral equivalence; nothing of the kind could have been the cause of this fact — doubly remarkable, as "Dignity," on the one side, and on the other as "Respect;" but it is because Kant saw only in Freedom, or the "Person," the moral sublimity of Duty.[1] Now, this

[1] "It is not so much because it is subject to the moral law that the Person has sublimity, but because it gives that law to itself, and is not subject to it on any other condition." (*Fond. de la Mét. des Mœurs*, p. 87.)

sentiment of Freedom appears to us *mystic* in the sense of being in "excess of pure Reason." It was an unacknowledged sense of the Absolute.[1]

Enable a man to feel, in some better way than by dialectical terms, that through Reason he has a foothold outside of Time, give him the consciousness that he is a part of an Infinite reality, then all is explained, and I understand "the sublimity of human dignity." The Reason immanent in man is found to be in a relation at once of identity with and dependence on an unknowable Being, by means of quite another notion than the notion of "Good." The Good is practically capable of infinity, and by that justifies the "categorical" character of Duty. Whenever we find a categorical imperative we have the choice of placing ourselves at one extremity or the other of Existence: in the Infinite, if our will decides in favor of divine desire; in nothingness, if appetite conquers. Here we have the idea of Duty again appearing in the idea of the Good, and both again in the Absolute. In our opinion, therefore, there is a mental operation which causes the moral law, wholly inward, to appear in the more striking and less subjective aspect of "divine Law;" and the consciousness is projected to the view of the consciousness itself, kindled and illumined by a radiation of images which bring to light all that is in us of eternally lovely and holy.

[1] Kant, besides, declares of himself that "practical Reason is sovereign over pure Reason, and that in certain cases the latter is forced to admit certain undemonstrable propositions as something foreign and not originating on its own ground, though sufficiently proved by practical interests." (*Crit. R. prat.* p. 327.)

The autonomy which Kant pointed out so well as lying beneath all Duty must be carefully kept pure; and the concept of the divine Will must be unhesitatingly sacrificed should this autonomy be thereby altered. But in our eyes, the divine Will is not the ontological concept of "Perfection" which Kant rightly regarded as "empty and indeterminate;" still less is it the theological concept, which would be "that of a will possessed of love, of glory, formidable, etc.:" for us the divine Will is the Good. We prefer this term to that of "Perfection" because it combines better in the consciousness the impression of subjectivity with the objective signification which cannot be taken away from the "divine Will." But in the meanwhile, as we go on further to determine that consummate Reality which is the Good, let us not forget that Mysticism need only be true to its own principles not to fall into the "dull circle" of those who would make Good, or the divine Will, an object, in the same way and degree as we objectivate things by the aid of our empirical concepts. The Good, which is God, appears to us only symbolically; and while we feel that it is "ourselves," we yet feel *that it infinitely surpasses us.* Mysticism has no other occupation than to pursue this symbolic representation and to renew it so that our life may be morally broadened and lifted; its ambition must confine itself to renewing with constantly increasing vigor and certainty, the experience of these two things, namely: that "the Kingdom of God is within us," and that it is without bounds.

III. The Kantian notion, it must be confessed, is at

issue with the empirical explanations of Freedom; but have the latter succeeded in reducing the determinations which have heretofore been called "free," or even "absolute," to the relativity of purely mechanical relations? We do not think that they have.

Reconciliation of Determinism and the Necessity of choice through a positive conception of Freedom.

Does the scientific spirit mean that Determinism is to have universal sway? Be it so, but in that case, though the name may express the contrary of the "indifferent," it must not express the contrary of "Freedom."[1] Determinism would not deviate unless the moral influence made violent ingress into the world of motion and matter, breaking each time the continuity of things which renders them intelligible to us. But if the mind insinuates itself into the series of motions, and directs without breaking it, so that "systems of motion" or "actions" result, science should not be disturbed, nor even take it into account. The source of things is of no consequence to science. We feel that in the source of *pure activity* disorder must not prevail, any more than in the phenomena which arise from it, and we feel that the spontaneities that we call "Life" or "Freedom" cannot be synonymous with "confusion" or "anarchy" — *but it is not science which tells us this.* Mechanical relations have not in themselves either "order" or "necessity;" they are merely imputed to them by mind. "Necessity reduced to itself is nothing, for it is not even necessary; and that which we call contingency, in opposition to a bald and blind mechanism, is, on the contrary, *a*

[1] The Freedom which practice requires is compatible with Determinism: it is really a higher form of conscious Determinism. — Fouillée, *Les abus de l'Inconnaissable*, Rev. phil., mai, 1895, p. 460.

*necessity of Choice*, the only thing which gives a reason to all things, because only the Good is to itself its own reason." [1]

"To be to itself its own end," this is the real foundation of Freedom; but this belongs properly only to the Absolute, and cannot apply to man except under the empirical conditions of deliberation and choice which have too often caused us to mistake Indifference for Freedom. Below man, there is nothing but Necessity in the ordinary sense of Determinism; above him, the Necessity is only what the mystics understand by the term "divine Will." Freedom is midway between the two, and the word must be used with respect to man alone.

Scientific fatalism rests upon a false conception of Freedom. The "Idea" is considered only as a fact of consciousness and as a purely "representative" effect, and one which cannot in its turn become *cause;* but the fact is overlooked that before the Idea posits itself in us as "Free Will," it has affirmed its efficient causality in nature. Life is but a fact of the rule of the ideal, or if you choose, an actual subordination of several facts under an $x$ of which we can become conscious only symbolically, by analogy with the unity which Reason imposes on our representative groups in order to form ideas. The fact of ideal influence cannot be disputed by empiricism, although it does not fall under the consciousness from the outside by means of perception: now, we do not claim for Freedom any transcendence more real than this. Freedom, like Life, is only Finality put into

[1] Lachelier, *Du Fondement de l'Induction*, p. 95.

practice,—"conscious" Finality no doubt, but this most important attribute of "the conscious" does not concern science in the least. — Will some one say that Life, complicated with finality or not, obeys definite laws, and that therefore although it may be hidden from the ken of Science, at least it sets up against it no destructive contradiction? But Freedom itself has even surer laws. It is quite true that man departs from these laws perhaps as often as he conforms to them, but such moral rejection does not weaken the reality of free-will any more than death invalidates the laws of life. Life itself also is an end which fails in everything living, and an effort which recommences at every moment. Freedom in man is only trying its wings. It cannot win complete victory or undisputed dominion while the will works under empirical conditions. Nevertheless it asserts its existence in those sublime laws which our Reason contemplates in the intelligible world, and which our good-will brings into the kingdom of Time and renders visible in "actions." In regard to pure Freedom, it is fused into one with pure Good. God is the Being who rests wholly as end in Himself, but towards whom all else is drawn through desire.

In the actual state of our knowledge it is not possible any longer to consider Freedom as an "indifference;" in this sense it can no longer be defended. It would not, indeed, be worth the trouble of defending, were there nothing more to gain from the negations of Determinism or from the restrictions of Authority than a sense of moral instability and a power of mental inco-ordinations. In our opinion

the attribute of free-will which ends and crowns all our facts of consciousness should be called "a force of attraction," rather than an "indifference," thus by no means interfering with the essence of Freedom. "Indeterminateness" and "contingence" are not negative terms, but express rather a very positive thing, the setting free of the will from all pressure of sense and of the will of others. Absence of exterior predeterminations is one of the conditions which enable us to pass from power to act, and is for us the state of "available force." Consequently, if I am a line traced beforehand, no longer in the net-work of the forces which impress me organically, but in that region of ideas whose influence is limited to "appearing to me," can any one assert that these predeterminations of Duty resemble the predeterminations of Becoming? And because my Freedom follows the sense of these ideal predeterminations, will it have suffered a diminution which could have been avoided had it followed a contrary sense? No one thinks it.[1] And lastly, if my heart is so fixed that Duty almost always prevails in my life over the senses, is there any reason to assimilate this constancy to that of the contrary habits which deteriorate the Will? Is the man who fixes his heart in the opposite direction more "free"?

Under empirical conditions, moral activity, like every other, can only be an Evolution. When "conduct" happens to fall within the uniformity of the instincts, it is another

[1] J.-J. Rousseau felt in the same way. "Does it follow that I am not my own master because I am not master to be another than myself?" (*Émile*, i., iv., éd. Charpentier, p. 314.)

sort of activity than the moral which manifests itself. Freedom only holds itself towards a fixed ideal which is called "Duty," and does not allow itself to be felt in any other way. Gradually, as personality emerges from our actions and character asserts itself, it is very true that the facilities for Good augment; but although this may become habitual, it is not in the sense of "passivity," as Determinism insists; it is, on the contrary, because the Will is augmented and the Person approaches nearer to a transcendent condition in which he would be constantly and without reservation "sui compos." This state we regard as a "necessary hypothesis;" it is an attribute of the Absolute which mystics call *divine Will.* We have no hesitation in applying to "the divine Will," these words of Kant's, "It is a supposition necessary to Reason in a being who believes himself conscious of a will."[1]

IV. Kant did not dare trust himself to mysticism. He feared lest human indiscretion should bring God down from the "Kingdom of Ends," where we know "that he exists," without knowing more, and place him among our interior events which belong as much to passion and imagination as they do to pure Reason. We have, however, a sufficiently pure and solid foundation in the Consciousness to give us the hope that there we may meet with the Absolute. The whole difficulty in the way of reaching this place, the very inmost of ourselves, is, that after we have been led to the threshold by the imagination and the feelings, we must detach ourselves from the symbols by attention, and

Holiness and Freedom.

[1] *Fond. de la mét. des mœurs*, p. 119.

conquer the subtlety of the passions by the purity of our disinterestedness. The "outward," upon which we live, so fills up the consciousness that we ourselves are driven out, and the heteronomy of its principles is imposed on us. Instead of merely witnessing all the changes of Becoming, apart and withdrawn in our free Reason, we immerse ourselves in them, and with great difficulty get hold again of our Freedom. All mystic efforts are merely meant to recall man more within himself and to make plain to him principles deeper and more profound than he had at first perceived, by reason of his carelessness or egotism. Under the name of "divine Will" nothing different to this should be sought for.

Unless the notion of the Absolute is to fall into decay, the two ideas of Duty and Freedom must be allowed to rule in it, in equal proportion. "Duty" and "Freedom," "Holy" and "Free" mean one and the same thing.[1] The attribute which unites us to the Absolute is the "power of duty." If a man were holy, he would never hesitate when placed between Sense and Reason; but no matter what happens, nothing in the world must come in between the two, as being of any interest higher than Freedom. If there did, it would only be to trouble the pureness of Duty, and it would not be Duty which ruled, but some other thing which "made the machine turn." Intimations of Duty must reach us, without exception of any kind, through personal Reason. There is no *mystic à priori* which can prevail over this necessity, and if any were insisted on it would become the object of sentiments quite the contrary of Reverence.

[1] "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty." (2 Cor. iii. 17.)

There is no outside power in existence, mystical or political, which can confer upon "my" actions any significance which is valid for "my" consciousness. Not only is it *me* — that is to say, the impersonal Reason of which I partake essentially — which confers, from within, morality to my individual acts, but it is among the functions of that same Reason to constitute powers outside of itself as "legislative powers." When these powers, once constituted, are found to be in opposition to my sensible desires, they must be able to justify this opposition which Reason alone has the power to exercise against the senses. Authority is born only of Freedom, or else we so weaken the meaning of this notion that it becomes merely "the defensive force of society."

The Absolute does not leave the consciousness. Nevertheless it could not be claimed that, when once the Absolute has been conceived each one preserves it in himself; far from it. The Good (and we know that this word may be substituted for the Absolute), from whatever angle it has been perceived, whether positively or mystically, could not assume all its natural proportions in the consciousness, without demanding instantly to leave it; only it knows, if it is pure, that it cannot communicate itself in any other way than that of Freedom, without being destroyed. Good seeks first, in the limits of the self, to actualize itself as much as the individual energies will permit, but regarding itself as infinite, and its proper form being lost if the consciousness of this infinity is lost, it never comes to the end of expressing itself in us. In this way the moral stimulus still continues after the subject thinks that he has attained for himself Happiness, Science, etc. The

Good therefore reveals itself as Force and as Idea; it is this twofold function which we render in the one word "Ideal." Wherever the Good is present, it is *expansive*, and when once the consciousness is filled *full of God*, it is carried outside of itself by a sublime alienation whose tendency is to bring joy, knowledge, life, etc., wherever this divine expansiveness can find room. This is the sense in which Maimonides speaks of the "*Faculty of Confidence*" inherent in Prophecy: "These two faculties, Confidence and Imagination, must of necessity be very strong in the Prophets. This Faculty of Confidence seems to me to answer to the Expulsive among the physical faculties."[1] The same notion is found in all theories of Inspiration; and it must be confessed that it is neither contrary to Reason nor Freedom.

It would be a moral Fanaticism to objectivate practical Reason outside of man, to create a will in the Absolute, unknowable and yet the director of our free motions. It is our duty to maintain stoutly the modern and Kantian idea of the "Person" against this danger, and to insist "that the Person shall never be a means." The Absolute is Person raised to the *nth* power. But as the Absolute is Knowable only in the degree in which we possess it morally within us, no attempt must be made to introduce some imperative into Freedom, under the name of "divine Will," based only on a puerile dread of the unknown.

It is the part of Reason only, to work out perfection in itself and to suggest to itself a wider imperative, in proportion as it advances in moral growth. The moral increment which

[1] *Livre des Egarés*, ch. xxviii.

the mind receives through the channels of mysticism is neither more nor less subjective than all other kinds of progress; there must be seen in it, as in the vital act, only an *intussusception* or even a more perfect identity which causes the Infinite to communicate only with itself in Freedom.[1] We shall see that as a consequence of this mystic or merely moral growth, the human Person becomes capable of a deed the originality of which has not been sufficiently recognized, and this is "Disinterestedness." Its originality consists in extending the rights of practical Reason over the senses, further than mere Duty. But unless it is the personal Reason which thus immolates a portion of its natural right to a "free" good, known only mystically, and if some other thing than the moral transcendence worthy to be called "heroism" mingles with suggestions of this kind, nothing is left but fanaticism and immorality.

V. The moral law, wholly *à priori*, makes one with the mind; and this innate character seems to forbid our speaking of its *supernatural* essence. Kant also looked upon the "divine Will" as a dangerous concept, likely to weaken the self-determination, that is to say, the very essence, of a good will. It is quite certain that if "the supernatural" tends only to externalize the moral Law, it attacks its essence. Even in its boldest plans of perfection mysticism must never dream of transcending Reason on any other side than that of Freedom, and that

The character of supernatural or "divine" comes from the transcendence of the intelligible ego over the empirical ego.

[1] The mysticism of Christianity owes its greatness to these characteristics of "inwardness" and "withdrawal into self." Only, its formula should always consist in the words of Isaiah, "Redite ad cor." (Isaiah xlvi. 8.)

would be, never to let go of Reason. Not even the symbolic suggestions by which alone mysticism has real opportunities of transcendence, can escape this absolute rule.

Let us place Duty upon the same foundations as Nature. Spencer was not wrong when he wrote, "This notion that such and such actions are made respectively good and bad simply by divine injunction is tantamount to the notion that such and such actions have not in the nature of things such and such kinds of effects. If there is not an unconsciousness of causation, there is an ignoring of it."[1] We do not believe that Duty can be based upon "consciousness of causation;" but on another hand, if there is any opposition in the consciousness between the sentiment of "causation" and the sentiment of duty it must be surmounted. For this object, mysticism seems to us to succeed best. If mysticism proposed a divine injunction *dogmatically*, that is, apart from the symbols which arise with it in the consciousness, it would be an attack on both the inward nature and the rational nature of Duty; but, in the same way that the symbolical character of mystic knowledge does not admit the synthesis of the ego and the non-ego, except in the consciousness where the symbols have arisen, and for it alone, in the same way, on practical grounds, there cannot be any "injunction" except for the will which lives by the symbols given to its consciousness. Upon these conditions the synthesis of Determinism and Freedom can be made in the consciousness and the soul will feel that there is not only harmony but identity between the free desires of the Ideal and the

[1] *Les Bases de la morale évolutionniste*, p. 43.

forces which lead it empirically whither tend all things with it.

Kant's scruples and the objections of empiricism are directed against a Mysticism assuming to play the part of pure Reason. In our opinion, no attempt should be made to suggest the desires of the divine Will, unaccompanied by the symbols, into the consciousness open to its influx, nor under any pretext to steal in from the outside between Reason and the Absolute. Perhaps it is from that cause that so many misunderstandings arise between the partisans of relative morals and of Absolute morals. There is some psychological factor, we think, the subjectivity of which has been able to cause general illusion, and which creates in the depths of the consciousness the apparitions of Duty which can be referred neither to the relativity of the other facts of consciousness nor to the dialectical rigor of moral maxims. As we see it, Duty is no more determinable scientifically than it is communicable through mystic channels. It must be created and posited in each consciousness; and it is in this Act of Love and of Freedom that the spirit takes its mystic flight beyond Life and Time.

Modern philosophy has done great service to future mystics by proving that Reason is capable of the same infinity as Freedom, for they can no longer claim for themselves intuitions by divine favor, or some new "syndesis" by which to penetrate the secret desires of Heaven. God Himself has nothing more exquisite enveloped in "Mysteries," nor anything "sacred" to set over against all the rest, "profane," than the laws of Holiness and moral perfection. Other

mysteries have no existence any more, and Reason has only to purify itself morally in order to be freed intellectually ("Cor purum penetrat cœlum et infernum"[1]).

There is no doubt that Kant opened Heaven to Reason with infinite caution; but it is enough that Reason could touch it for an instant for us to feel that it is truly ourselves who were able to reach so far. We have learned that whether it brings us mere counsels of common-sense, or whether it is clothed in the majesty of the divine Name, it is ever and always Reason, and that all that is needed to reach the Absolute is a generous singleness of effort on our part. Many mystics, contemptuous of common Reason, fail to remember — even Saint Augustine himself when he presumed that the author of all things "had to detach from the essential Reason which approaches us to God some grosser part, out of which he formed the practical Reason, after the same fashion in which Eve was taken from the side of Adam"[2] — the grandeur and simple beauty of that Duty which is common to all men. The ancients, on the contrary, understood that the moral function gives Reason a place above everything else. The notion of "supernatural" which was so confused to the Greeks and so contrary to their genius, only comes to light when their poets or philosophers discourse of Duty and the marvels of Holiness.[3]

[1] *De Imita. Christi*, l. ii. c. iv. 2. [2] *De Trin.* l. xi. c. iii.

[3] May I always preserve in my words and actions that august Holiness whose sublime laws dwell in the heavens where they took birth, laws of which Olympus alone is the father, which men have not made, and which oblivion will never wipe out; in them breathes a God of might forever untouched by age. — SOPHOCLE, *Edipe Roi*, v. 863.

Whence comes the universal inclination to "supernaturalize" the moral law, which yet all the time forms part of ourselves? Is it solely fear which inspires the ideal opposition called "Duty," and the matchless pangs of Remorse which seem to gnaw at the very essence of the soul? It is quite as much love, we think, and the delicate joys which the spirit feels in the urgings of the moral law, as endearing on one side as they are forbidding on the other. To the dominating voice of Duty when it posits itself in us categorically, true for all time, the consciousness can only answer by acquiescence. From the moment of acquiescence threats change into love, and divine resistance is transformed into marvellous identity; whence we receive the knowledge of an "inner kingdom," as all-pervading as the opposition of Duty has seemed absolute. Man needs only to make unfaltering response to the divine desires of Reason and the state will become confirmed, and he will find consolation for everything in life and death by the ineffable joys of Freedom which identify us with the Absolute. "The Heart, which is terrified by the fearful power of the Law which no mortal can resist, is open to the divine will, which it recognizes as the true essence of its own will, and thus it finds reconciliation with the Divinity."[1]

[1] Lange, *Hist. du matérialisme*, t. ii. p. 581.

## § II. — OF THE ABSOLUTE IN MORALS

I. Inadequacy of Dogmatism in Morals.

II. Empirical morals, which are tantamount to pure Egotism, fall to pieces before the "facts" of Reason and Freedom.

III. The part of Mysticism in morals.

IV. Determination of moral Good, divine and human together.

V. Twofold error of Asceticism: its attempt to establish itself without reference to Experience, even the mystic; and its tendency to isolate man in the Absolute.

I. No system of morals can be sound which is not supported by the autonomy or the inwardness of Duty; but the character of objectivity must also accompany the autonomy.

Inadequacy of Dogmatism in Morals.

When it comes to the question of making the Good objective, there is danger lest it should lose, when projected outside the consciousness, that absolute value which we recognize in its interior and universal form. What is the Good which may be determined positively and which can inspire us with the *quasi* mystic feeling of "Reverence"? Empirical criticism has brought so much science and sincerity to bear upon traditional Morals that, we must confess, it will not be easy for Dogmatism to maintain its legislative power over the morals of the future.

Of all the rational principles which have served, up to the present day, to qualify human acts morally and to establish doctrines of Disinterestedness, none are secure from charges of lack of science and good faith, or from the attacks of more interested scepticism. For example,

the idea of Perfection may be allowed to enter into judgments of Taste, but not to furnish principles of conduct; adaptations which do not concern the material *being* and which are only for the satisfaction of the thinking subject cannot be called "ends" in the strict sense required by Morals. The Aristotelian notion of "the Good," nearer in practice, it is true, does not confer a sufficiently original mark of "morality" upon our actions: an Object is wanting which should impress its *stamp* on Freedom, unless we redescend to the more characteristic Eudemonism of Epicurus from that of Aristotle. The Dogmatist-Mystics, on their side, do not furnish an adequate definition of the "Beatitude" which they would substitute for human happiness as term of our desires. The dangers of Asceticism as a scheme of Conduct will soon be apparent to us. All the other theories of Duty can be easily attributed to Utilitarianism, and this one to Empiricism.

II. Nevertheless, if we choose Empiricism we must renounce the transcendency of duty. A Will which consents to an action that does not exalt the sensory life for the individual and the species would be "immoral" according to this doctrine. According to it, the mental complications which lead us to consider certain actions, which are directly disagreeable to the person doing them, as "good" and even "obligatory" are simply the devices which Life employs against the misdeeds of egotism; and having reached the high degree of adaptability of which Humanity is capable, it is felt that Life can no longer go on progressing, that is, becoming broader

Empirical morals which are the equivalent of pure Egotism fall to pieces before the "facts" of Reason and Freedom.

and longer, without further and further idealization; and that here is all there is, of anything more in Duty than in thirst or sleep.[1]

There is no mistaking such an idealization. In morals Empiricism leads us direct to Egotism, just as in ontology it claims to lead us back to the Simple. But Egotism by itself is not Duty, any more than the Simple is Being. Empiricism looks for the essence of Will, as for the essence of Knowledge, in the nearest organic fact to motion that it can find; while really the vital act does not become Knowledge and Will until it is supplemented, that is, until it takes from the subject a supplementary act which *issues from itself alone* and not at all from things. It is this wholly subjective element which Empiricism constantly neglects to take account of in morals, though it appears to do so under various names.

Egoism is the "tendency to endure" which is the root of life, and the whole empirical system of morals consists in the development of this tendency by adding to the resources of Instinct those of Reflection. What is meant when they speak of "expanding" life, not only in length but also in "breadth"? Either this additional progress tends only to *combine* empirical causes so as to increase the *quantity of facts of consciousness,* or it tends to bring the *complication* of *something else* into Life. We assume the latter hypothesis as more favorable to Empiricism. To "expand" Life, then,

[1] Throughout . . . self preservation has been increased by the overruling of presentative feelings by representative feelings, and representative feelings by re-representative feelings; as life has advanced the accompanying sentiency has become increasingly ideal. — SPENCER, *Les bases de la morale évolutionniste,* p. 93.

means to idealize it; but this ideal element which is supposed to be added to Life cannot be strictly called a "re-representation," that is to say, the very distant repercussion of the nervous shock upon the innermost depth of the organism. The moral element of Life is more than transformation of sensible desire, because it gives a value to Life which our consciousness perceives, absolutely apart from all the rest. If the moral law were nothing but a derivation from experience, it would not happen that man would hold even more to his own conservation "in this manner and under these conditions" than empirically and simply. "To be living" is not even the minimum of morality; until *something else* is preferred to Life, no one commences to be "a man."[1] In "expanding" itself, Life could not go to this length, for an act superior to Life is asserting itself in our Freedom. That the rational being prefers nothingness to sinfulness is much more than an accidental fact; it has so important a signification that we can use it as an aid to discern between contingency and necessity, between phenomenal being which is Life, and pure being, or being raised to the power of the ought-to-be. This inward fact of the moral alienation of the ego, and the completeness of its opposition to the search for nothingness pure and simple, or "despair," must be retained in our minds as one of those crucial facts which show us the way when, the guide of experience failing, we find it neces-

[1] In the same way that Life appears to be a resistance to physical forces and yet nevertheless does emancipate itself under certain conditions, Freedom triumphs over Life, not by opposing itself, but by superposing itself by acts which may go so far as to render the two principles completely separate and independent.

sary to attain knowledge by the promptings of the consciousness alone. Nothing but Duty can give us entrance to Being.

Empiricism feels itself strong as it sees how helpless Dogmatism is to point out where Absolute morals lead; but if it is a fixed fact that within the limits of Experience there is no individual Good which fits the measure of a morally great man, and since it is in such a man that we must seek the model of our species, we are compelled to look beyond empirical matter for the explanation of the moral fact. The "Sage" does not ask to know the Absolute as he knows all the rest, to possess it; he does require, however, that it shall *be*, and he needs at least to feel through and beyond fleeting symbols that Reason loves its disinterestedness.

The Good of Reason is not Life; it asserts itself in the reflecting consciousness as "something else." Not only is the mind unable, after reflection, to stop at materialistic Eudemonism, because sensation is but momentary and too often repeated destroys itself, but Ataraxy even, we cannot say it too often, would not suffice. For the most part, those who content themselves with it cannot resist the weariness of a happiness which is purely negative.[1] Life is not static; it is dynamic throughout, and hence we need to be quickened, not from the outside alone, but also with a moral stimulation which might be named "the sentiency of Reason." We have as much need to *will* as we have to see and to feel;

[1] We may meet the man Horace describes, "desiderantem quod satis est" (Od. l. iii. ode i.), but such a state would be the very triumph of moral ambition over empirical desire. Let us not forget that it was this "moderate-minded" man who cried out, "Non omnis moriar" (l. iii. ode xxx.).

all of them together make up living. Direct observation of facts teaches us that moral ambition is not, as it has been called, a disease of Freedom.[1] Its pathology consists less in the infinity of desire than in the abdication of its infinity; and this is the cause of Pessimism. Life asserts itself in us as Freedom, seeking, in the good things which follow each other, that Being of which they are only appearances. We resist this by choosing to place Wisdom in a practical moderation which is really only "the sense of the useful." But Reason will not allow itself to be brought to this place which the animal life already holds, and Freedom, unrecognized and misunderstood, avenges itself in an overwhelming sadness, inexplicable and intimate, like the Fate of the ancient mænads.[2] Moral Pessimism has been defined in such a way as to show at once the evil and the remedy: "a state

[1] It cannot be denied that a natural defect of moral vigor often engenders discontent and brings a man down below his Reason and his Duty. "The mind of man," says Hume, "is subject to certain unaccountable terrors proceeding either from the unhappy situation of private or public affairs, from ill health, from a gloomy or melancholy disposition. . . . It is also subject to unaccountable elevation and presumption proceeding from prosperous success, from luxuriant health, from strong spirits, or from a bold and confident disposition. In such a state of mind, the imagination swells with great but confused conceptions, to which no sublunary Beauties or enjoyments can correspond." (*Essais moraux et politiques*, 12*e essai*.) But if many men well-endowed both in character and fortune have been subject to these phenomena, we are compelled to maintain the commonplace of "human sadness," which for the whole species is nothing but *want of faith* in that Freedom where the Absolute dwells.

[2] The man who adapts the purpose of his life to external conditions will have to redescend successively every stage of being, and bend to, submit to, and identify himself with the things whose shock he dreads. From that time he will see only evils in the moral consciousness, in the intelligence, in the feeling, in existence itself; for all these things are contradicted by the outside world, and at last he will come to consider absolute annihilation as the supreme good — E. Boutroux, *De la contingence des lois de la Nature*, 2e éd. p. 127.

of emotional egotism in which the soul seems to have retained the power to suffer while it has lost the power to give itself."[1]

Freedom is really the "power to give one's self," taken no longer for an indifference, but in as positive a sense as we say "life" or "thought." Seen in this light, Freedom has in it the element of the mystical. Nothing is more unscientific than this phenomenon of the moral alienation of the ego.

III. What are the exact relations between the moral consciousness and Mysticism? Before answering this question, it must be borne in mind that the mystic fact originates from the need of a synthesis between the Mind and Nature; it has been and always will be an aspiration to unite ourselves to some Being which contains substantially the world and the ego while it dominates them. In order to know if the moral idea partakes of this need and this aspiration, it must first be examined, as we have proceeded to do, as to whether this idea admits or excludes the Absolute. In the negative hypothesis, the mystic fact, deprived of all moral significance, would be confined to the order of Knowing; and on this exclusive ground it has no objective value, and would be nothing more than a means by which to get rid of the *never completed* character of our thoughts, a kind of "false start" into the Unknowable. Subjectively we should be relieved of Mystery and Fatality by a God all the more gentle because we make Him in our own image; but of positive acquisitions there would be none at all. On the

The part of Mysticism in morals.

[1] Paul Bourget, *Discours de réception à l'Académie Française.*

contrary, if the moral idea will not be enclosed in the limits of Life, it is because the Absolute demands entrance into Knowledge and thence into Conduct, by a necessity which is even stronger than Logic. The mystic fact enters the whole consciousness through this opening, and holds legitimate rule there.

Does this identity, or at least we may say this close affinity, of Mysticism and Morals appear in history? It does not properly belong to our task to examine, but we must nevertheless remark, in a very general manner, that religions have always contained all that was known of morals at the epoch, and in the country where they originated. "Morals and religion," we are told, "have no relation, or at best only very *rudimentary* ones, with lower stages of civilization. Savage animism is almost devoid of that ethical element which to the educated moral mind is the very mainspring of practical religion."[1] "Rudimentary" relations, it may be, but the savage put into them all the moral life that he had; and by degrees, as civilization brought order into the practical notions of Justice, Kindness, etc., the mystic consciousness incorporated the new data, and made them the chief of its means to unite itself with the Absolute. Moreover, if the question is one of *constituted* religions there is no longer any occasion for us to defend our thesis against such historical statements, our object being the essentially inward "mystic fact." We ourselves have tried to explain by what psychological corruption the effects of symbols degenerate into infatuation and passion. It is not surprising

[1] Tylor, *Primitive Religion*, t. ii. pp. 464–466.

that the egotism of the ruling classes should have occasionally made sad havoc with the mystic tendencies of our nature; but among the masses who have suffered religious oppression Freedom also has made forward bounds which have brought them to the knowledge of the good and true God, and there have been souls in which the Ideal was strong enough to pierce through veils of forms to shine forth in the light of the most pure symbols.

Were Mysticism to be understood in the sense of "Knowledge" and "metaphysical explanations," to the exclusion of moral progress, its highest expression would be nothing more than a learned Fetishism, and there would be nothing left for us but to condemn it radically. But it is, in fact, the exact contrary. The Heart takes the place of pure Reason to effect the *moral* synthesis of the ego and the non-ego, but not to effect that other synthesis which we call "Knowledge." Our minds when in the mystic state do not discover any new empirical fact, nor perceive any new association of concepts, logical or mathematical, etc.; all the mind does is to create for itself symbols which give us consciousness of Freedom and of things not expressible in concepts, such as the *Dignity* of Person, the *Infinity* of Reason, etc., which are contained in Freedom. When, under the influence of symbolic suggestion, Wisdom assumes in us the proportions of enthusiasm, or takes the active form of "Love," the mystic fact is accomplished; that is to say, at that moment an alienation of the ego takes place in our Freedom, as mystic as the state of the imagination during Inspiration or Prophecy. The act of Disinterested-

ness, so cold and calm in its sublimity that it seems to send the life into the extremities rather than recall it to its organic centres, is the thing we find in the mystic act pure and true; and it is this fact of moral alienation which gives nobility to all the rest of the mystic alienation, and which makes it at the same time the most true and most perfect state of consciousness. It will be understood that such a fact must be immediately preceded by an act of intelligence in the highest degree suggestive or "representative." Thought then animates itself and endeavors *to inspire itself*, or rather, it should be said that it receives from the Absolute an affirmation of love, an impression of eternity, — some Grace, in short (we use the word in the natural sense and not the theological), which places Freedom in communion with creative Good. Otherwise, thought could not go so far as these effects of alienation nor give practical Reason sufficient impetus to arouse it from the embraces of Life.

IV. What, then, really is the pure Good for which the mystics strive? We have said many times that the originality of Mysticism consists only in Disinterestedness; but it must be confessed that Disinterestedness is only a condition or form of our volitions, and it might always be asked what there is at the root of the disinterested will, until at least some intelligible End, if not some positively desirable Object, has been discovered. Though this End has a place in Life, it cannot be demonstrated by any force of reasoning that it is wholly contained therein. Pure Good appears to us both real and

Determination of moral Good, divine and human together.

desirable under the words: *the salvation of humanity.*[1] The Mystics give this a place outside of time and others place it in time, but in this connection it matters little. There are qualities to be developed, and joys to be diffused just as much in the interests proper to human life as for what Mystics call "eternal salvation." When once the supreme benefits of Dignity, Culture, and Humanity, which have no other limits than the limits of Freedom, are agreed upon, it remains to be known whether the empirical conditions of our Knowledge and Will suffice to preserve and give them constant value. The mystic claim is this: to become so conscious of the Absolute that Life will be idealized according to the aim of Reason. The claim is valid provided the Reason cannot by its own means reach some sovereign Good whence to bring back an Ideal strong as it is pure, and an effectual guide for Conduct.

It does not seem to us possible that the Ideal can be made concrete, or the Good intelligible, by rationalist processes. The expressions "Impersonal Reason," "the Beautiful," "the Good," have not even so much objectiveness as the "Ideas" of Plato. To speak of them it must be, as we speak of First Principles, Life, Force, etc., by directing the mind to the results by which we recognize them. But on another hand, these effects of the Good, the Beautiful, etc., which we call in one word "facts of Reason," are too inward

[1] Kant says that the determining cause of the will ought not to be the representation of an object, for the Supreme Good would thus be brought into the empirical sphere. We agree with him in that we propose to Freedom no other end than itself (human deliverance). Its symbols are not like the representations which Kant blames as empirical. (*Crit. de la raison pratique*, p. 157.)

for us to be able to make them intelligible; and what are we to do "to assimilate to our mind" (for this is the sense of the word *to know*) the very things which constitute the mind. We have seen that it belongs to the mystic consciousness alone not only to be present at those depths where "First Principles are felt," but above all to recognize, through and beyond the symbols, their character of "excessivity." It is this *excessive character of the First Principles* which constitutes for us mortals the whole objectiveness of the Absolute. Every other attempt to think the noumenon by intuition or reasoning, and to fix the ideal upon our mobile consciousness seems to us doomed to failure. In the full light of criticism the mind realizes that it holds nothing but empirical constructions, and turns away from them as from idle dreams, because the Heart has added to them nothing of itself.

Nevertheless the Ideal, from whatever heights it comes to us, is for the purposes of Life, and has no other matter to inform with itself. Is Life, then, susceptible of these transformations; and towards what heavens does it aspire to remove? Let us note here that it is not the mystic nature of Disinterestedness to cause a man, in fact and *quocumque modo*, to submit to a loss which will serve for the Good of others, but to make him resolve on such action out of *true* generosity which bids defiance to all the worldly maxims of La Rochefoucauld. If there is any place morally for Mysticism, it is because *others*, taken in the broadest sense as humanity, have not empirically the slightest right or quality for the sake of which I must deprive myself of a

particle of my Happiness or my Life on their account; only when I cease to consider them in that light do others begin to impress me with the grandeur of Reverence and moral Love, and only when I draw these sentiments from deeper sources than Experience and pure Reason. The Absolute must appear to me as it is to be found in men, potentially at least, and so to speak, seeking after itself; and I must be able to feel that Infinite which moves in Freedom and which labors for expression in every thinking being. Every man is mystic after his own fashion as soon as he becomes conscious of this more than empirical potency, whether he deems it "Person" in Time, or whether he regards it as a "Soul" for Heaven.

The Act of Disinterestedness, therefore, is accompanied by symbols which bring the Absolute before the Imagination, whence it flows into the Reason, and lastly shows itself to Freedom. It has thus a better foundation than in the rational Reason, which knows only how to compare things logically, without ever creating any new relation between them; in his turn man becomes creator only when the Heart effects this mystical meeting with the Absolute. When such a meeting has once taken place, our Reason retains possession of two feelings: first, that it is habitually possible; second, that nothing is more desirable; and from that time forth, man has entered upon the road of moral Progress. He will seek henceforth to live beyond things relative; not by cutting off anything from Life, — that perfectly organic work in the midst of which we find ourselves engaged, together with all things, — but he

will seek to make it, so far as he is able, universally good, as it appears to us in God, free and rational above all; there is really no other Good except the moral or human. If any one wishes to call it "mystic" the word adds nothing objective and only recalls to mind the means by which the Good is posited actually and completely in the consciousness.

Here we must be careful. The mystic consciousness of the Good is not for us to delight in, as in the most exquisite of pleasures, but as an End which Life itself is seeking, and for which it aspires through all its ascending adaptations towards Humanity. When I have idealized my own life for myself, my heart feels within (no matter what doctrine it has absorbed, provided it is good) that it should extend the benefit to others, and begins to consider itself as under the obligation of Loving-kindness to others. Is it possible, moreover, that I should thus consent to give up a part of my life, my time, my pleasures for the sake of the Good as I see it, and not derive from it some happiness much greater than any empirical satisfaction, some wider joy which seems to come from the Infinite? Or does Science warn me to consider this feeling as "excessive"?

In view of counteracting Mysticism, perhaps, the empirical school itself has often pushed the principle of Disinterestedness too far. It seems to us that when a man has become aware of a Good greater than any personal interest, and is ready to renounce even Life in order that it may be realized in the general consciousness of humanity, if he still has a sense of pleasure from all that he accomplishes towards it, there is not the least reason why he should disquiet his

soul and reproach himself as though such purely moral delight were a sort of fraud upon Duty. To warn him merely that if he gives a chief place to these sensations, they will substitute themselves for the moral purpose and vitiate the Disinterestedness, should be enough. Do we desire to see the man who succumbs in an act of free and pure heroism reproach himself in dying that he feels an emotion of patriotism, of religion, a moral recognition of humanity which mingles with the noblest pulsations of the heart? Whether mystic or stoic or empiric, Morals must always be human. Mystic pleasure is not one of the least remarkable phenomena of man's inner life. Its claim to be diffused is not inferior to that of Disinterestedness itself.

V. Asceticism is a moral system which cannot stand against the reasonings of Empiricism; it tends to displace the axis of Conduct, and remove it to a sphere of fictitious interests where our will cannot act. The Absolute is manifested to us unmistakably in the desires and imperatives of the Consciousness only, and the moral matter which is to be divinely "informed" is life itself, and especially social life. Mystic acts designed to obtain consciousness of the Absolute in order to augment the Absolute, either objectively or subjectively, would be nothing but absurdity in the first case, and egotism in the second. Practically and definitively there is no apparition of the Absolute except in the human Personality. Let us not forget that the mystic experience does not tend to create an object heterogeneous to the world and to the ego, that is to say, an entity all the

Twofold error of Asceticism: its attempt to establish itself without reference to Experience, even the mystic; and its tendency to isolate man in the Absolute.

more negative as we endeavor to enlarge it, but that it tends to make us aware of the Infinite in ourselves, above all our successive events and the empirical ego. God is, then, practically and theoretically, only that infinite and intelligible "surplus," the first fruits of which we find in ourselves and in every reasoning creature. The man who seeks to find this surplus outside of himself, by means of direct knowledge, would be applying himself to something that *is not*, and the man most desirous to attach himself to realities would practically be lost in chimeras. Such Religion, Saint John says, is not sincere.[1]

Mysticism risks leading the affections astray, if, after becoming aware of its Object, it desires to remove it altogether from this life, and under pretext of infinity tries to escape the empirical exigencies which bind us with inferior beings. Nature suggests to us, in the interest of Life, and under the naïve forms of "instincts," laws which of themselves combine with those of the best Ethics. This unity must be recognized by Mysticism. It is the same Absolute impressed upon all evolution in the mobile state of "becoming," which also appears in the consciousness in the immutable form of Duty. It is impossible that it should be opposed to itself in Life and in Freedom; or man, thus divided between two principles both claiming to govern irrevocably, would find himself essentially doomed to Evil.[2]

[1] "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (1 John iv. 20–21.) Although Love as well as Reason may take a ground outside of experience in order to give a species of infinity to its motives, yet its object is never displaced; the object must always be in Life.

[2] "Men are still to be found," says Spencer, "who regard voluntary suffer-

Whenever Reason manifests itself as prohibitive of a certain action, we may be certain that some condition of existence is being protected; and whenever Reason manifests itself as imperative, it is because an ideal fact relating to Freedom, and not one of the empirical conditions of Life, is being set before us. But, as Freedom in spite of its transcendence appears in us under empirical conditions only, and as Life is really the ensemble of those conditions, it could be said that Freedom by opposing Life would be working for its own destruction.

It is permissible to think that everything which finds its way to us positively, either through mystic channels or mere Reason, tends, practically, only to greater solidarity among men, and that all purposes of the Absolute are practically contained in the word Loving-kindness. But this fruitful disinterestedness which gives solidarity to humanity in the Absolute, both for Life and beyond, is not found at the root of Asceticism. Too often it has leaned towards the practical negations of pessimism. "We shall all die alone," says Pascal, "therefore we must live as though we were alone."[1] But it is a purer mysticism when a man throws himself into action and life as though it were forever, and does it simply, without attempts to be alone and isolated with the Absolute out of Time. Empirical morals and mysticism might find reconciliation in this thought "to be a member . . . to have no life *except by the spirit of the body, and for the body*."[2] Life, in the empirical sense,

ing as a means of securing divine favor." (*Les Bases de la morale évolutionniste*, p. 203.) Such perverted mysticism has no logical affinities except with the wicked theory of an "Evil Creator."

[1] *Pensées*, art. xiv. 1. [2] *Ib.*, art. xxiv. 59 bis.

does not have this quality of "Spirit" which allows love to be universalized. For this reason its egotism is brutal; it individualizes, and we see it in Nature triumphing the most when individualization is the strongest. On another side Asceticism has too often led astray minds bent so sternly on the spiritual as to conceive of *Spirit* in moral opposition to Life; it should have been called always, as Pascal calls it here, *the Spirit of the body*, and such laborious efforts to conceive the Good outside of Humanity ought never to have been made. Not even the Stoics succeeded in replacing universal and abstract Reason in its natural centre, where it appears as "Human," and as such belongs to us. God could not have his social reign under the Stoics, any more than under the rigors of Asceticism. It is a moral necessity that God should "humanize himself." What good is it to us to seek the Absolute in itself, and to surround it with impossible desires not in Time. The Absolute for us is only a *reflection* which falls upon our life and idealizes it. Whence does it come? Every one answers this question for himself by an act of the Heart, which has the power to evoke symbols of the Infinite. But when we speak of the Absolute altogether, we must not attribute substance to it anywhere but in Freedom.

## § III. — THE MYSTIC ESSENCE OF COURAGE, HONOR, MODESTY, BENEVOLENCE

I. The Moral Organism.
II. Courage is a sense of the Infinite.
III. Excessive and mystic nature of Honor.
IV. Reverence is the impression of that Dignity which is a manifestation of the Absolute.
V. Modesty, the mystic pride of Reason.
VI. The contradictions of Benevolence: Love sensible of the Infinite.

I. The moral activity does not apply itself to one species of effects only. We may say that its functions are as distinct as those of the senses. The Will, as well as the Sensibility, manifests itself in aspects whose originality is only to be looked for in the subject itself. According to circumstances, and sometimes occasioned by the same objects, the will *constrains itself* to resist, or *bends* to adapt itself to Love, or *recoils* at an apprehension of Modesty, *contracts* in an impulse of Envy, *braces* itself to give Commands, *bows* to receive them, etc. What is the principle of these familiar differentiations so poorly expressed by images of Motion? Perhaps this is our opportunity to learn exactly what is the force that rules in Freedom, whether it is the Will-to-live or something else. Morality resolves itself by analysis into various feelings, the most important of which, or at least those which appear to the consciousness as the most original, are: Sincerity, Courage, Honor, Reverence, Modesty, and Benevolence. Now, we find that each one of these moral functions of the soul has in it a tendency which is "excessive" to Life.

The Moral Organism.

We readily grant that there is nothing mystical in sincerity. This virtue is like the principle of identity in Morals, as important and primary as that principle is in Logic. Without sincerity the soul of our actions is wanting, and the loveliest virtues, when they lack the moral identity called "purity of intention," become the most immoral. An habitually double intention, or "Duplicity," is destructive of all morality, which must express the inner unity of character by outward unity of conduct. Nevertheless, if we carry to the last degree the assimilation of sincerity to the principle of identity, we shall see that it is an unfruitful and entirely formal moral quality, producing nothing of itself, and that it is the general condition of our virtues rather than a principle of energy of the will. Therefore we need look neither to Empiricism nor to Mysticism for its origin; it has no existence apart, but is simply to the Good that which evidence is to the True, — a fundamental condition for the assimilation of the consciousness.

II. What better definition of Courage can be given than as the contrary of "violence"? Violence being only a passional excitement of the soul, Courage must be the dominion of Reason over all our desires and all our emotions, the serene triumph of Freedom. There could be no such thing explicable by Empiricism as an energy permanent in form and limitless in effect. To pure science, the Will emerges from the temperament, and is nothing but the clearly defined result of its component elements. Courage is no longer anything but a matter of equilibrium, and it is exactly this consequence which warns us to look

Courage is a sense of the Infinite.

for other principles. Whatever may have been said, it is quite as impossible to measure Freedom as it is to assign a purpose to it; it is something in excess of life. We may perhaps succeed in measuring the intensity of sentient desire and the emotions which accompany it, and we may succeed in predicting the recurrence of the same phenomena, but in this order of facts the will is only a regulative factor. Its influence does not consist in the co-ordination of energies for the preservation of the empirical ego, as does that of Life, but its office is to unify the facts of consciousness, intellectually as "concepts," or morally as "actions;" so that the complete ego, intelligible and empirical, which we call "*a Character*," is constituted. In order to convince ourselves that the will is really this tendency in excess of life, we must observe that it is something generally experienced in the most ordinary conditions of life, and not alone in a state advanced and transformed by culture.

Conduct bears the marks of Mysticism, even though it should try to remain positive and withdraw itself from all idea of the Absolute; the presence of the Absolute in Freedom is something impossible to be gotten rid of in Conduct. It almost always occurs that when we take away from the moral Imperative its Absolute character, it transfers itself to the sensibility, and Desire resumes on that side the categorical form which we have refused to allow to Duty. Although disorder ensues and the state induced is a pathological one, inasmuch as the sensibility is not susceptible of the categorical form, and is averse to the Infinite, yet

facts of this kind are none the less instructive. Suicide is a general evidence that when the will has turned aside from the Absolute, its own limited and successive desires have no hold upon it. Life has only to appear to us plainly in its irremedial contingency, for us to feel such hatred of the contingency that we have no wish to live, and are ready to kill ourselves. This is an act proper to man, and takes the place in the Reason of the idea of the Absolute. The will-to-live is, in fact, categorical after its own manner, and life would be giving the lie to itself, unless *something other* than itself should have place with it in the Consciousness, thus rendering a conflict possible. It is not in the power of an animal to commit suicide. When man, of himself, seeks extinction, this practical negation of the Absolute testifies that we have in our Freedom the power also to practically affirm it. Courage, if you choose, is only a quality which moderates and forms the balance between all our other powers, but it is one which itself can find only ideal support.

Is not this deviation of Freedom into desires less than itself the explanation of that Mysticism which is prevalent in epochs of literary decadence, affecting the morally degenerate, and manifesting itself in false appearances of Love and other passions? Such a corruption coincides exactly with the mental corruption of symbols which we have already mentioned.[1] There is no better symptom of force in peoples or individuals than a mystic sobriety, that is, the dominion of Reason over the whole of man, his

[1] Cf. Second Part, ch. ii. sec. iv.

senses, his literature, and even his Religion. Mysticism, according to an expression of Saint Francis de Sales, has its seat at the "pinnacle and summit of the mind in order to moderate, and not to debauch" all our powers.

The will appeals to the Absolute. Whenever it has been able to give to itself the Absolute in some object practically inexhaustible if not infinite, it is born anew in each instant of its own activity; it actualizes itself completely in each of its actions, upon which, although in themselves limited, it confers the infinity of its intention, and at the last it comes even to identify pain with love.[1] Courage, or the power to live *like a man*, with simplicity and nobility through all vicissitudes, is no other than the presence of the Absolute in Freedom.

Excessive and mystic nature of Honor.

III. If an objective definition of Honor may be allowed, we might call it "the exterior of the Consciousness." Subjectively Honor is the feeling which thus manifests itself externally. It seems to us impossible to resolve into empirical elements a feeling which is at once so simple and so dominating.[2] If, on the other hand, the moral transcendence of Honor is granted, the value of

[1] "Amor ex Deo natus est nec potest nisi in Deo, super omnia creata quiescere. . . . Amor leve facit omne onerosum et fert æqualiter omne inæquale. . . . Amor plus affectat quam valet," etc. (*De Imit. Christi*, l. iii., ch. v.)

[2] The following empirical explanation of honor seems to us entirely below the reality: —

"Suppose a man is calumniated; there is a hindrance to the carrying on of life-sustaining activities, for the loss of character detrimentally affects his business. Nor is this all: the mental depression . . . may bring on ill health. Hence the flagitiousness of calumny." (Spencer, *Les Bases de la morale évolutionniste*, p. 50.)

the Person, which is the whole foundation of Honor, is beyond all parallel, and we must simply say that it is "excessive." Therefore it is but logical not to exchange this good for the good of even Life itself. At the basis of duelling there is an error, namely, that "blood redeems from contempt," but there is also the mystic sense of Honor as one of the manifestations of the Absolute in us. It has been said that the mystical character of Honor is due entirely to the superstitions of the middle ages, but this is not true; it has always had the same value as something worth more than Life itself, and as proof of this we need only the fact of the existence of the Oath at every epoch of history. The Oath is founded upon the same implicit judgment as Honor, and we need not exaggerate its religious character. We rely upon the assurance "that man will put nothing on a par with the Absolute of duty;" and the solemnity of the Oath consists precisely and solely in thus evoking the Absolute, which, in the usual state of mind, is not always associated with the idea of Duty.

IV. Kant placed the notion of Respect in the feeling of "impersonal Reason," and it is well that it should be kept there. Nevertheless, it must always be said that the moral Law cannot impress us unless it appears as a "fact" as in case of its real triumph over our senses. We experience it first in ourselves, and immediately the sense of "Dignity" springs from it. When others appear to us invested with dignity in their turn, that is, when we believe that they, like ourselves, have taken Duty as motive of their material exist-

Reverence is the impression of that Dignity which is a manifestation of the Absolute.

ence, it is only the same impression of our own dignity reflected in them. The common recognition of the moral identity of Respect and Dignity appears in the general acceptance of the very expressive definition of immorality: "a man who respects nothing." But what is Respect, when taken in this sense, but a mystic fact? We have here an experience of which we are the subjects, but which has no object in the empirical consciousness. Respect has its birth in the very same act by which our first sentiments of duty are formed: it is the Absolute appearing to our Reason, thence reacting upon the senses, spreading the moral emotion over the entire consciousness. It would be the part of pure Reason to give an account of Respect if it dwelt in the region of concepts; but it is a fact of consciousness which surpasses in extent all possible representations. All the abstract ideas we could form could not possibly bring before us this apparition of duty, greater than being, which has no means of access to us except under the guise of symbols created by Freedom.

V. Modesty is even less explicable if we insist on excluding from it any *a priori* quality of Morals. The empirical matter which constitutes this sentiment, generation, and all that accompanies it, has no need of justification before the moral Law. It is an assemblage of facts, just as simply dependent on Determinism as heat or vegetation. Modesty has no existence in science. How, then, has it been able to introduce itself into the consciousness? The prehistoric data which have been proposed as explanation are not in place here, but it is curious to note that both

Modesty the mystic pride of Reason.

the mystic Consciousness and empirical Morals agree in considering the sentiment as *an error*, the cause of which is indicated differently in the two systems. According to Empiricism it is because primitive ignorance or barbarism has not yet been able to give way on this point. The mystics believe, on the contrary, that Reason has had a precipitous fall from some sublime Kingdom which they name "the state of Innocence." It is worthy of special note that these two opposite interpretations both agree, nevertheless, in a similar faith in the fundamental excellence of things and in a creative Beneficence. That holiness of things which we call Naïveté, which disappeared with man's first sin, say the mystics, partakes, on the contrary, of the evolutionist Ideal. They rely upon Progress to do away with the inexplicable perturbations of modesty, together with all the other prejudices from which the human consciousness suffers, and they believe that the mystic dream of a state of Innocence will find its actual accomplishment in Humanity. The scientific stage would be reached. But just here we are not concerned with these contradictory hypotheses. The psychological fact of Modesty consists in an aspiring instinct of Reason, which is endeavoring to assert its transcendence over a group of empirical facts; and although this instinct (which must not be confounded with temperance) has only the practical result of disguising nature, it is found to exist in us as invincible as it is useless.

The susceptibilities of Modesty have been regarded as pathological phenomena; at least they cannot be justified. No explanation can be found for them, we believe, unless it

is the acknowledgment that they are a superb effort of Reason to rise above the empirical conditions under which she is forced to act here below. Ideal in essence and formed only "to rule," Reason finds all servitude irksome, and specially dislikes anything which disturbs the serenity of her inmost empire. She is not the mistress of these impressions of pride, and strives to maintain, by stratagems of Modesty, the appearance of a dominion over the senses which she does not effectively possess. It will be perceived that this notion does not contradict either of the suppositions that we have mentioned, and that it completely retains its mystical character.

VI. Benevolence, still less susceptible of definition than Modesty, is found to exist in the consciousness, in opposition to all determinations, supposed or conceived dialectically. In benevolence we touch, at the foundation of Freedom, upon that thing which must be regarded, under the name of "Heart," as its own proper act and the triumph of our autonomy. But the Benevolence which enters the consciousness as a religious function claims to be seized in its pure essence; that which is ordinarily experienced, mingled with other things and enveloped with other absorbing motives, is not the moral essence which we are seeking to find. Even admitting that men are rarely good, except hypocritically, out of pride or self-interest, it is still more rare to find Benevolence without at least some admixture of that alloy which causes it to lose something of the universal form and fundamental disinterestedness which would make the true "Kingdom

The contradictions of Benevolence: Love sensible of the Infinite.

of God" here below. Benevolence consists in a contradiction, or at least an implicit, as difficult to explain as the concept of Cause, Substance, etc. It is perhaps the same here as it is in Logic from the outset; an idea could never spring into the consciousness from the principle of identity pure and simple, and such a thing as a disinterested choice, or an impulse of the "gift of one's self" so-called, actions containing the strongest assertion of our Freedom, could never be made from rational principles of Duty. In the sight of Reason more than one ego is opposed to another in a relation of moral equality, and this is the source of Duties, the Law. Now, we venture to assert that from the negation of this moral axiom Benevolence has its origin. The ego, instead of opposing itself to others as an equal value which claims to subsist apart, desires only to see itself confounded with others in an identity which seems to us not only moral but mystical.

In what other view than the mystical could we alienate that which has received from empirical Reason the name of "Law," and violate at its own expense the strict principle of "*cuique suum*" and in short transfer our own life, time, liberty, and happiness to others? Empiricism will never succeed in showing Benevolence in its pure essence; and Altruism, its rational expression, will forever stop short at the place just where Egotism would have more to lose than to gain; of instinct these are its sacred limits; and of instinct also, Benevolence passes beyond.

We must not exaggerate, however, what we call "the contradictions of Benevolence." The acts of moral alienation

which Reason cannot justify by the help of its empirical principles, it justifies in some other manner. The "ego," which is not wholly in Experience nor in Time, ceases to appear before itself empirically, and has no longer any concern except with the essence of happiness, science, freedom, etc.[1] It feels them first in itself, but very soon also it feels them outside of itself, as an object without limits. In this way it succeeds in escaping from the tyrannical judgments of Egotism. The sense of the divine, or the immutable Good comes to light in the ego, and it conquers the opposition of the senses all the better because of the unconquerable assurance, which dwells down deep in the consciousness, that this Good always remains wholly belonging to the ego outside of Time, in common with all the other reasoning beings to whom it may devote itself. We are able therefore to replace the word "contradiction" by that of "transcendence." The mysticism of Benevolence consists in veritable *inspirations*, that is to say, in such representations as the understanding does not know how to construct, and in which, nevertheless, it must be said that Reason participates to a very considerable degree. Not only "a fool has not enough stuff in him to be good,"[2] but Genius itself is specially manifest in the kind of "thoughts which come from the Heart." We touch here the last recesses of the soul, beyond which not

[1] We recognize that this intuition could not take place by means of abstractions and concepts, nor could it be obtained by ordinary reflection. To obtain for one's self that effectual vision of attributes which renders man distinct in the order of empirical things, a more advanced condition of reflection and one which places the consciousness in a symbolic state is necessary. Thence comes the mystic nature of Benevolence.

[2] La Rochefoucauld, *Maxime* ccclxxxvii.

even Mysticism is permitted to pass in search of the *divine*. Courage is really the triumph of Freedom within itself; as Benevolence, it reigns also without; not in that empirical outer world which it is unable to enter substantially, but in that inner world of souls which has for Space only the indivisible Good everywhere diffused. It is of this Kingdom, in which all spirits together have dominion and which adds only to the freedom of all, that Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." [1] The pure and true gift of the self is the act which reveals God to the Heart and to Reason at first sight; when a soul is capable of this, it possesses the highest degree of mental life and moral life. There is nothing to wonder at any more in all the creations of Genius or Freedom; whatever they may be, the soul feels itself capable of the same, because it is in God.[2]

The moral transcendence is accomplished, and God gives us his ultimate manifestation here below in that fine form of Benevolence which is called "love of souls." To transfer life and happiness from self to another is less than to transfer the Reason; and if the gift of self can take on anything of Infinity, it is when we give it as such, in view of increasing the Personality and Freedom of others. When once a man has had the intuitions of the germs of infinity within the soul ready to awaken and grow, the energies are intensified and

[1] Matth. v. 5.

[2] The principle of intellectual creation, like that of every other kind, is contained in the magnanimous and unreasoning gift of self. . . . The genius of the artist, like all the other great things of the world is an act of faith and love. — P. Bourget, *Discours de réception à l'Acad. Fr.*

attach themselves to the object presented, with feelings of reverence as well as the most intimate satisfaction. The man who carries views like these into the work of Life, of Apostleship, or even Politics, is in contact with an order of "mystical" affections. In this case Benevolence depends no longer on anything here below, and Christianity itself could never have introduced anything better into the human consciousness. If we were to give a name to the emotions of this kind which take possession of the consciousness without disturbing it, and which only augment its inner empire while drawing it outside of itself, we should call it "a love which has sense of the Infinite."

# CHAPTER SECOND

## THE ETHICAL FUNCTION OF SYMBOLS

### § I. — THE ETHICAL CONCEPTION. FUNCTION OF THE INTELLIGENCE IN MORALITY

I. The unpremeditated nature of the Good: moral inspiration. The influence of symbols is supplementary to rational evidence and representative of the moral object.

II. The universal "divine Vision": moral reconciliation of Christianity, Rationalism, and Positivism. The Mysticism of Jacobi.

III. Analysis of moral Emotion: transcendence of the mental representations which accompany it.

IV. Absolute verity of the symbols given to the moral consciousness. Their esotericism.

V. The function of Grace.

VI. The Relations of moral and esthetic symbolism. Concerning Eloquence.

I. The Absolute, by this time, is no longer, in our eyes, an abstraction, or limit, as it were, with which to define verbally the bounds of the knowable; it is the supreme Unity which implies substantially all first principles, and which is, in its wholly active essence, Life, Reason, and Freedom. It is the Absolute which creates us and all things with us. Now, in the same way that Life is made up of ever renewed initiative, and as it is impossible to foresee what it will do to-morrow, or what unknown organs it will create to extend its functions, we may say that the Absolute seeks

The unpremeditated nature of the Good: moral inspiration. The influence of symbols is supplementary to rational evidence and representative of the moral object.

in human Freedom for broader forms of Good only, and for means to realize the Good more fully within the limits of life itself. Essentially it is to please that the Ideal is constantly aspiring to renew its youth. If it were to be arrested in forms so fixed that neither enthusiasm nor disinterestedness could occur, the Ideal would be at an end, and it would also be the end of Freedom, which has nothing more essential than these acts.

Will any one ask us to define exactly the psychological processes by which the Absolute, always immutable and always new, never ceases to be pleasing to Freedom? They might as well ask how it has been in the past that life has gone on, constantly creating organs more and more adapted to outside things, and from what design it has modelled the ear and the eye, which they allege it has given itself to see and hear with. The Ideal, of which scientific Knowledge is merely a condition, exists in us as a state of effort, and the symbols under which it seeks for itself in the consciousness have nothing fixed about them except their purpose, which is that man shall *become free morally and physically*. If we recognize the presence of the Absolute in Freedom, it is precisely because this kind of activity escapes the calculations of Determinism, and appears to us simply as a creative power.

When the Absolute encounters certain favorable conditions which are described as a "good" or "generous will," it posits itself there, as for Life, with its essentially inventive energy, in infinitely varied modes. It would be foolish to ask the aid of dialectics, when it is a question of speaking directly to Freedom and of leading it morally beyond the

"ego" by effective love of the Good. It is a moment when ordinary "speech" is not enough; there must be Inspiration.[1] The Absolute "appears," vividly and only for one instant, manifest "to the Heart." If in that there is any mechanism to be demonstrated scientifically, it seems to us to be that of Hallucination. The images which reach the consciousness in this manner and which unite together to represent to it an object which demands moral supremacy over all the other representations, could be nothing but symbolic; that is to say, they are expressly given to the individual for him alone, and they elude the curiosity of others in very much the same way that Life eludes the researches of vivisection. Should such symbols be called "mystical"? It is not, at any rate, a mysticism which is confined to the consciousness of Revealers or Mystics properly so called; every soul which has "created" something in the moral order, and whose works are stamped with that mark of originality called "inspiration," partakes of it. Even in the obscure and uneventful life, of which every man should acquit himself as though it were a moral task, it is certain that the mystic fact

[1] Kant is far too abstract in his *Typique de la raison pure pratique*. It would not be possible for the moral conception to realize itself under the conditions which he sums up in the expression "Rationalism of Judgment." (See *Crit. de la raison pratique*, p. 238–244); it requires representations; and as these representations must not be empirical (in this Kant is right), they will be symbolical. We quite understand Kant's apprehensions. There is nothing so difficult and dangerous as the symbolic conception of the Absolute. But the Heart "has its reasons" and its methods, and there is a mysticism which, by mere superiority of desire, has kept free of fanaticism and self-contradiction. No one can deny that symbolic thought has had its triumph in such states of consciousness as those of Francis of Assisi and Joan of Arc.

has opportunities for accomplishment many times over. Any sharp conflict between the demands of duty and the desires of the senses, in which the will is thrown out of itself, is quite enough to call it forth, and to suggest an appeal to some quicker measures than those of reasoning.

It is very true that it would be dangerous to abandon Duty to impulses of the Heart, and to refuse to know it otherwise than by analogies formed freely in the Imagination. The legislative power of Reason, and the axiomatic character of its judgments, therefore, must be preserved above everything else. The mystic influence of symbols has no weight against that natural evidence, which illustrates *à priori* certain maxims, and imposes them upon all men as rules of conduct. But although such influence as we speak of is ineffectual unless it is in accordance with these common maxims, and unless it strengthens them mentally, this aid from *Inspiration*, in our opinion, is a necessary thing, Idealism itself not being able to furnish us the secrets of moral obligation, and above all unable to lead us to disinterestedness pure and true. The most consistent notions of our understanding, those which come nearest to the "ought to be," are merely schemata, and can do nothing except to adapt themselves to things empirically. If it is true that there is some firmer and purer *à priori* in the understanding, it has nothing representative about it, and consequently we cannot *think* it. In order to obtain consciousness of it, we are forced to plunge into the depths of the intelligible ego, where analogy alone, as we have seen, really can take us. The moral Object which manifests itself to us effectively, and so as to

win our consent, could not, then, be a positive idea, a notion. It is an *unreal* type, created in every part by the subject itself, while drawing from its unthinkable depth appearances of Freedom, Eternity, Perfection, etc., which partially conceal the contingency of the objects which must guide our conduct. It is true that Reason contains in itself every motive for action, even the most heroic, but we are not conscious of these motives unless we unfold them out of our own essence, and unless we tear ourselves forcibly away from the tyranny of empirical affirmations, to use them only *symbolically*, that is to say, as representations, imaginary in themselves as they are sublime in their effects. It is in this sense that we venture to say that Rationalism and even Idealism itself are not sufficient to create a moral obligation, strong and all-powerful as it must needs be to master the senses.

To press the study of the "moral fact" further than the rational explanation of Duty is no indiscreet prying into the consciousness; this fact is accompanied in the imagination and the sensibilities with precise expressions and individual signs, which are important for Morals no less than for Psychology. What a man wills, and what a man is, shows itself in every inner vibration which accompanies the act of volition, and not in the one act of decision in which it terminates. Of the mystic symbols, may we truly say, "Expression is no longer looked upon as something detachable *from the fact expressed* and more or less far off, but as an integral part of such fact or of its history."[1]

[1] Fouillée, *Idées, Forces*, t. i., p. 141.

II. According to Christian doctrine there is a close relation of causality between acts of disinterestedness and the production of mystic symbols. That the Absolute is invisible is only because of the moral obstructions in our own hearts. No other interpretation should be given to the beatitude "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Although it has served as the fundamental axiom of a rigid Asceticism, it may be regarded also, in the truer and broader sense of "disinterestedness," as the moral canon of all mystical occurrences, voices, apparitions, etc. Let it suffice on this point to quote Saint Augustine, who seemed to divine the meaning of this text even better than his wont, so that he penetrated to this moral reason, the substance of which many have allowed to escape them for the shadow of the words.[1] What is it that is here glorified by the words "pure in heart" except "disinterestedness," and not that mere corporeal integrity which is incapable of the

The universal "divine Vision": moral reconciliation of Christianity, Rationalism, and Positivism. The Mysticism of Jacobi.

[1] "How foolish are those who seek God with the bodily eyes, since he can only be seen by the pure in heart. Now this is what we are to understand by 'a pure heart;' namely, a simple heart. Its purity is easily sullied even by our good actions themselves. The eye is pure when it has learned to look beyond human opinion straight to God, who appears only in the consciousness." (*De Serm. in monte*, l. i., t. iv., p. 131, et l. ii., p. 345.) "God seeks that inward purity by which everything in us becomes pure, without as well as within. . . . He himself has said, 'Give, and all shall be pure to you.' But is not 'to give' essentially an act of the heart? If the hand opens to give, and not the heart, it is nothing, and if the heart opens though the hand has no alms to dispense, before God it is all one. The Pharisee who understood material purity only, and who had bidden the Saviour as his guest, would have sent the sinful woman away, with indignation of heart, had she approached him. But the Saviour perceived the woman's thoughts." (*Enarratio in Psalmum* CXXV.)

real transcendence by which alone the heart is freed from all egotism? The fact that nature has been attacked in the stronghold of its instincts by this gospel precept really indicates, *a parte potiori*, the integral alienation of the ego, and shows that only on this condition is there influx into the soul of the mystical species under which the Absolute appears. Nor must the question be solved otherwise outside of Christianity. The expression "divine vision" would take the place of the word "Ideal." There is no other difference.

Certain theories have been collocated under the term "Ethics of Feeling," which have succeeded in proving the practical inadequacy of Dogmatism, rather than in establishing Ethics upon the basis of any deep psychological observation of their own. To trust simply in the moral inspirations of the "Heart," as higher instincts of sympathy and justice, is to give up all science of Conduct, unless we consent to go to Mysticism for the explanation of those instincts. The mental form of the "inspirations of the Heart" must be sought for; and as they are proclaimed superior to the concepts rationally worked out by the consciousness, a reason must be found for this transcendence. Thus we are led to recognize the existence of the symbols under which objects in themselves empirical assume all the aspects of the Absolute, and are practically raised from the transitory condition of phenomena to the importance of the "ought to be." What is that "light of the heart" of which Jacobi speaks? The representative element which accompanies and sustains the sentiments of the upright man must at all cost

be set free; and as this element cannot be brought to the concepts of the understanding, we are admonished that it must belong to some other part of the mental life. These symbols which elude the power of Criticism, these apparitions which become extinct in the consciousness the moment we endeavor to make them pass out of the Heart, where they arose, into the light of a curious and investigating Reason, are facts of life rather than representations, creations of the ego rather than reproductions of empirical being. Imagination furnishes its brilliant, chimerical, exhaustless matter to these substantial apparitions, and Freedom breathes into them her divine breath. Thus they become alive, and it is not strange that our Reason does not recognize them, for they remain never the same.

Had the philosophers of whom we speak not restricted their own theories by the critical and destructive part of other theories of Duty, they would have found themselves in complete accord with Mysticism. The only separation between the two explanations is the mystic idea of Grace. In fact, according to the Mystic theory, morality leads the mind to the borders of the Absolute and even gives it an impulsion to enter therein; this is not enough, however, and the impulse of pure Freedom cannot succeed, unless there is a corresponding impulse in the Absolute. This difference, however, does not seem to us irreconcilable. Must not the Absolute, of necessity, appear to every consciousness which complies with certain conditions of morality? To assert the contrary would be to attribute to the Absolute a gratuitous resistance, a Freedom of caprice merely, and in the end, possibilities of

"infinite Evil." Mystic esotericism cannot, under pretext of "Predestination," go so far as to introduce fatalism into Love, from which the idea of God has obtained pure form. The Absolute, according to the mystic hypothesis, makes answer to the appeals of moral Desire; and it is the Absolute itself which is posited, by means of Grace, under purer and better chosen symbols than it would have been possible for Freedom to have given to herself. But if we admit this hypothesis we must not restrict it so far as to render it futile. Every time that human reason soars into the pure regions of Duty, and every time that Freedom makes the act of disinterestedness, we must believe that God enters inevitably in the paths of Grace, and that we do not precede the infinite Love by a single instant. There is nothing but human imperfection or the inconstancy of human desire that can cause delay and thus put obstacles in the way of the supernatural communications.

The moral function of symbols, then, is not limited to certain individual cases of temperament or culture; even those persons who do their utmost to exclude the Absolute from their minds, lift themselves in practice, above all empirical determinations of consciousness, and enter the Absolute through Disinterestedness, surpassing not only Egotism, but even Altruism itself. Whether we will or not, under whatever form we embrace it, as Progress, Freedom, Divine Will, etc., we must go into a region of the consciousness where there is no longer empirical succession or relativity to obtain the *pure* Good. But in thus going aside from the things which are properly our own, to love, in itself that

Good which in its purity resists every snare laid by Egotism, we are mystics whether we know it or not. This is the price which has to be paid for the act of Disinterestedness; and how often has it been done, with a mysticism even purer for having been unconscious! Have we not seen Positivism turn into a religion? — for the simple reason that it was sincere, and the Absolute, driven out of the system logically, re-enters it by another door, morally. That holy thing, enthusiasm, which all generous souls have in common, forever finds new means of reproduction and life. The positivism of Auguste Comte had its symbolism and did not conceal it. Since that time pains have been taken not to fall openly into such unexpected results, where extreme ideas meet by affecting the same mystical expressions; but in the inmost depths of the consciousness there has been no change in the processes of the Ideal. The mind in vain declares to itself that the Absolute is unknowable. In vain it flies to abstractions to inspire itself morally without images, without emotions, by direct and irreproachable rules of Conduct; it is not in our power to change the "Reasons of the Heart" into mathematical rules. It does not appertain to us men to be in a state of impassible love without representations of any kind, even though it should be a purely moral Love. In its best moments the mind cuts loose from reflection and proceeds all at once to remake the synthesis of itself for purposes of life and action. Without analysis and reflection there would be no science, but to content ourselves with them for life and for Freedom would inevitably lead to unconsciousness and death. Whatever kind of Ideal man

may have chosen, he must symbolize it in order to love it and to live from it.

We are well aware, moreover, that it is not a question of exterior symbols, socially agreed upon. The more intellectual force an individual has, the more right have we to think that the symbolic traits under which the Absolute appears to him will be interior and personal. We might even add that it is important in moments of practical Inspiration to reduce the imaginative species to their minimum of representation, and the Ideal will thus gain in moral greatness just as much as it loses in the mind of its empirical matter. But in the end, in order to appear to us at all, the invisible Good must assume some shape in the consciousness; that is to say, it must be *symbolized.*

III. Whenever a serious question comes up between the senses and Duty something takes place in the consciousness which is called "moral Emotion." It is properly in such states of consciousness as these that the Absolute reveals himself symbolically. Outside of ourselves the moral object does not exist; the man without power to create it in himself would be reduced to purely empirical acts, not worthy the name of "actions," and would fall morally to the rank of the brutes. With the latter, the principle of Conduct which is called "instinct" is a real power of mental construction, not properly to be considered as creations, since they never vary, but nevertheless constituting an inward "object"; they are images, not successive and isolated, but a practical design forming in the animal consciousness a systematic group of representations.

Analysis of moral Emotion: transcendence of the mental representations which accompany it.

In order that Conduct should be "moral" there must also originate every moment in the free subject co-ordinate representations, and the consciousness must give to itself the *objects* which it is to embrace practically. Now there are two signs which distinguish moral conduct: (1) that the "practical" object is not so positively like the object which appears in the inspirations of instinct, — a mark all the more important because the autonomy of the Will consists precisely in this *liberal* intention of our actions, not strictly useful to life; (2) that this same object originating in Freedom appears in representations as varied as those of the instinct are unchanging.

It will be granted that if there are degrees in moral life, it is only on condition that this twofold psychological law of our actions is applicable progressively also; that is to say, upon condition that the intention is manifested as more and more liberal or super-empirical, and that the symbolic creations arise in the mind more distinct, expressing the Good in some relation not before felt or understood. It is no less legitimate to say that there are, as it were, degrees of intensity in Duty; not that the moral obligation ever fails to manifest itself categorically, but there are situations which demand such exertion of moral energy that the imagination and the will are brought into a state of hyperesthesia, and are so much wrought upon as to make the state seem like a real case of hallucination.

In the midst of some such morally critical moment, we know that we have needed to evoke, with all our force, the practical object concerned (our country, Justice, our oath, etc.); that is to say, it has been necessary to form in the mind an instan-

taneous and faithful representation capable of inspiring and holding in check the suggestions of the senses and of egotism. This dispassionate and sublime enthusiasm takes possession of the whole soul; it is a true act of alienation, and morally an act of death.[1] Either we must not be afraid to say that in such acts (which a man should be able to perform at least once in the course of his life, if he would deserve to be called "a man of heart") the intelligence has no share; or else we must grant that the mental conditions of Disinterestedness elude all the rules and predictions of Methods. We call "mystic symbols" the representations under which the ought-to-be is posited in the consciousness as transcending being, or if it be preferred, the Ideal, as transcending Experience. From the practical point of view, therefore, two cases of mental activity may be considered. The oftenest it is only a ques-

[1] The act of disinterestedness consists in crowding out the suggestions of appetite by associated mental representations. If the moral effort tends only to restrain the sensible desires within the limits of prudence and social justice, it causes only a slight alienation of the ego; and the practical judgments, always present in the background of the consciousness, suffice. But in other cases, the alienation of the ego is total; for example, rather than violate his deepest convictions or give up some Good which he sets beyond all price, a man must abandon himself, his life, his possessions. Now, at such moments, if the non-ego triumphs morally over the ego, it can only be in two ways: either the man thus led to the borders of Annihilation is prevented from drawing back by a sense of Honor or some other *extrinsic* motive, and inspires himself with a sort of delirium of intoxication in order to rush on *without seeing anything*; or else he appeals to mental representations, as transcendent as the decision he is called upon to make, and he takes heart and *inspires himself* morally, so that his freedom and his love remain in a state of intense consciousness, as long as there is a pulsation of life left. The term "ideas" no longer applies to these representations; the mental life, in such acts of pure Disinterestedness, is henceforth not in a normal condition, and such a man has ceased to think empirically under the schemata of Time and Space.

tion of making our actions agree with each other, according to a plan which we find developed inwardly in our practical Reason; in which case the work of the understanding is only discursive; our concepts combine dialectically, in an order corresponding to that which our desires borrow from the moral Law, and we can express to ourselves Duty by means of the ordinary inner speech. But there is another *extraordinary* process which we shall call "emotional" or "symbolic," which is enjoined under the circumstances we have pointed out. In an emotional state, the whole consciousness is taken possession of at once; the moral object comes before it too suddenly or too overwhelmingly to allow us to appeal to words and concepts in order to express it to ourselves. In such case, there is "representation" to be sure, but the representation is *synthetic* and not discursive, *symbolic* and not dialectic.

Of course, it is not a question here of the passional emotions, which have nothing of the ideal about them, and whose limit is their power to excite our senses pleasurably or painfully, while yet we are not able to translate into language these grosser experiences. But in the moral emotion which occupies our consideration, feeling by no means dulls the ideas or makes attention impossible, but is closely united with the representations which express the Good in the consciousness, and is uplifted in proportion as they are ennobled. Let us look at it a little nearer: what will be, in such cases of emotion, the ideal expression so transporting as to lead the soul to enthusiasm and heroic decisions? As we have seen, inward "speech" is not sufficient

to do this, and nothing is posited analytically in the consciousness; but the moral Object is posited in us as a totality, by means of a synthesis of images, both powerful and unforeseen; it is therefore a fact of symbolism. All the other intellectual operations may be summed up in the word "Thought," but this is "Vision."

It must be acknowledged that what are called "intense states" of consciousness do not proceed the oftenest from our moral activity; it would seem rather the contrary, in that the passions have very different affinities for the sensibility than Reason has. But when the will succeeds in gaining admission to the imagination, and the attention is fixed upon a moral object, such a case of mono-ideism becomes the most noble of hallucinations. The nature of the facts in this case admits a prolonged attention; for the moral object, far from being exhausted like objects of sense in one single intuition, extends and increases the longer it is dwelt on. Such an object will express itself, in the mind which is generous enough to give it persistent attention, under symbols which become more and more intense, until the soul, all absorbed in them, is sublimely hallucinated, and returns to itself full of eloquence, enthusiasm, and courage. The power to take possession of the imagination and the senses, as strongly as do the passions, must be accorded the moral idea; but the power does not belong to a merely representative idea, and there must be added to it an element of Freedom which transforms the Idea into Ideal. In the esthetic or moral order, the idea may be called objective, because it is still a fact of repre-

sentation; but we have already seen [1] that the objectivity proper of the Ideal comes only from its character of an "excess," which declares itself in certain experiences called "facts of Reason" or of "Freedom." And as, on the other hand, the idea cannot exalt the consciousness except in so far as it manifests itself with the utmost intensity of expression, it results therefrom that the moral activity, in order to raise itself to the state of emotion, becomes truly mystic, — that is, productive of symbols. By virtue of symbols, moral love has a marvellous susceptibility of increase. Unless the efforts of the will yield under the resistance of Egotism, the moral emotion and its accompanying symbolic effects will go on augmenting until they have complete possession of the field of consciousness.

Absolute verity of the symbols given to the moral consciousness. Their esotericism.

IV. When we assert that, although the phenomena of Inspiration withhold themselves from the criticism of science, they yet carry with them the maximum of truth which man can hope for here below, we do not believe that we hazard views of too exceptional a nature. We may even cede the title of "realities" to everything else, yet Being manifests itself only in those analogies which spring forth spontaneously from contact between the empirical consciousness and Freedom. The mind at such moments reaches heights whereon another light succeeds to the light of experience; and thither it is fitting that we should allow ourselves to be conducted by faith.

What is there to fear on this point from the Imagination elsewhere so deceptive? "The passage of the Imagination

[1] First Part, ch. ii., sec. ii.

from the possible to the real," says Renouvier, "is made under the mastery of some vivid emotion, some ardent passion."[1] But is this passage never made under a legitimate influence of Desire? and are all the representations born of Freedom equally futile in the eyes of the Thinker? This is a question of supreme importance, and we find no criterion on the subject in the positive domain of method. "If," as the same author expresses it, "the reflective and will functions are null or of a very low order," I should distrust this creation of internal objects, which might easily be only the "mental whirl" of a mind inflamed with passion. But should the case be quite different, and if an evidently disinterested will and an extraordinary love of the Good have been the *cause* of these symbolical effects of the imagination, ought I not to examine them freely for their precious meanings, which, though irrational in the sight of "pure Reason," have an incalculable value for the intelligence as well as for the Conduct? M. Renouvier says very justly: "The origin and intrinsic worth of the sentiments which have possession of the consciousness of a Revealer, and constrain him to make his assertions, strictly speaking, might depend upon certain higher laws which are unknown in the order of the world."[2] We are not speaking just now of "Revealers," but it seems to us that this appeal to "certain higher laws" remains good for all consciences, under certain conditions of rarely perfect morality. It is our opinion that the place of these higher laws is in Freedom, to which the Absolute has access at

[1] *2e Essai de critique générale*, t. ii., p. 12. [2] *Ibid.*

every instant, positing itself in new modes, but *how* it is done eludes our inquiry.

"Phenomena" or the empirical forms of Being are one thing, and the glimpses of the "Ought-to-be," in which the Good really imparts itself to those who are capable in their Hearts of endless desire, are another. These choices which the Heart makes, rationally inconceivable and emanating from the moral charm of the apparitions of the Good in the breast of Freedom, form the very fact which the mystics call "divine Love," and we are so bold as to say of this love the same that has been said of human love: "The choice which is opposed to Reason comes to us from Reason. We have made the god of love blind because he has better eyes than we have and sees things which we cannot perceive." [1]

Mystic symbols must not be required to explain themselves on leaving the consciousness wherein they are formed. The ordinary moral matter which Reason or introspection furnishes us with is ours from which to compose treatises on Morals; but symbolic matter has a totally different use, one that is exclusively practical and personal. When once the Heart, by grace of education and habit, has attained such a morality that it is devoted to the desires of the Better, it exerts a marvellous influence upon the imagination; but the symbolic forms which it gets from this inexhaustible source, though undoubtedly gifted with esthetic value, are excellent only as far as they serve the needs of the subject, and so far as they are unconscious of the attention of others. In order to know them they must be taken by surprise from

[1] J.-J. Rousseau, *Émile*, l. iv., éd. Garnier, p. 230.

the naïveté of souls which are mystic without knowing it. Genuine apparitions of the Absolute, instead of calling for direct expression, ask only to be translated practically into Deeds; this it is which distinguishes the Goodness essentially "Creation" and "Genius" from activities of all other kinds upon which we bestow the same names, while the thing itself remains infinitely above them.

May we be permitted at least to say what forms mystic symbolism assumes most readily? Suggested by desire, subject to no laws but those of Analogy, for which external differences no longer exist, the symbolic representations arise from the most unexpected coming together of any empirical object, or even a fact of consciousness, and the fact of Freedom which demands to express itself in us. A "burning bush," a "still small voice," etc., have afforded the Prophets an apparition of God; the mind, therefore, can lend its infinity to the least gleams of the empirical consciousness.

Yet the symbolic form which prevails over all others, if we may believe the testimony of mystic narrative, is the human form. How could it be otherwise? Let us not forget that the mystic fact is only the enlargement, or better perhaps, the development in the direction of truth, of our tendencies towards infinity; let us not forget that it is only the manifestation of the self to the self for the purposes of this source of activity and of Freedom which cannot find direct expression. And surely it is the face which is the most natural expression of the soul, and reflects things too complex to be known dialectically; and in the face it is the

look. For this reason the face is the most familiar symbol of Mysticism. Any one who has read many mystical authors becomes convinced that the depth into which the imagination of Seers plunges, in order to see God, is some human appearance, not merely idealized as Art can do, but vivified by the power of Faith stronger than Art. Oftentimes mystics have held focussed by their own interior gaze nothing but *another look*, a symbol scarcely material, but yet all the more active and able to open the imagination to vision of the Infinite. Upon this slight support mystic thought finds foot-hold; the soul can then see itself, still through the imagination, but with such minimum of representation that it is very near to perceiving itself in essence in its continuity of Cause and Substance with the Absolute.

V. Practically, mystic appeals to the Absolute must be rare. Symbolic representations cannot last in the consciousness in its ordinary state. Reason and habit are sufficient to maintain conduct under the influence of Duty. Moreover the abuse of Mysticism is a most serious danger to morality of conduct.

The function of Grace.

The requirements of life do not often need more than a virtual presence of the Absolute in order to keep under our tendencies to Egotism. A healthy soul has no trouble to distinguish the positive character of life, and without for a moment withdrawing itself from that moral transcendence which claims to stamp our intentions, it holds itself at the call of Duty, in cheerful confidence "that it is not hostile to Being, and that the Good is at the very source of life itself." Mystic appeals to God are only the *reserve force of*

*our moral life.* It is not our task to measure the degree in which we may have recourse to mystic channels. It is no easy thing for any individual man to know whether there is a balance between the difficulties which nature sometimes piles up in our Life and the resources which, on the other hand, she gives us in Freedom. In any event, mysticism shows us her most original conception in such cases; and besides, she is at her very best when the idea of Grace finds full reconciliation with Freedom. Grace can only be an extremely subjective and incommunicable apparition of God. When a man finds nothing in his own heart with which to make the Absolute present to him, no other man can help him to it. In such states of moral anguish and impotence, the soul is less inclined than ever to cling to the symbols which come from without. Never has the consciousness so great a need to rest in itself or to reveal itself to God only. That force which is able to call forth supernatural characteristics, as interior to the soul as they are to the ego, will act in a manner contrary to mystic illusions; its symbolic creations will seem to originate in ourselves, and will precede very slightly (if they precede at all) the decisions of the Will. It is in this slight interval of distance, imperceptible to us, between the symbols which are striving for expression in the consciousness, and the act of Freedom which terminates the moral crisis favorably, that the mystic hypothesis of "Grace" places itself. The infinite Goodness intervenes at this moment of sharpest anguish; a divine insight comes to strengthen our vision of the Absolute, and to determine our relish for Duty. It is quite true

that there is no hypothesis less capable of proof, and yet none can be imagined which is morally more worthy of respect.[1]

VI. It is only under certain moral conditions that the mystic fact occurs effectively. There are other facts, it is true, not properly belonging to the moral consciousness, which cannot do without the same interior apparitions which we have called symbols; but we shall not be able to speak of them at any length.

The Relations of moral and Esthetic Symbolism. Concerning Eloquence.

When practical decisions are no longer in question, but esthetic effects, we cannot speak of enthusiasm and "apparitions of the Absolute," except so far as such effects are conjoined to Freedom. In this respect dramatic Art and Eloquence have a great affinity of psychologic process with Mysticism. In both of these Arts there is much possibility of mystic suggestion and afflux of the whole consciousness about the Object which is found good and beautiful. But even here enthusiasm does not effect such important results as moral emotion; there is nothing but a pleasurable experience soon exhausted by contemplation, leaving behind it no such traces as respect, remorse, kindness, etc.

[1] The thing which renders the "religious function" difficult to explain psychologically is that the distinction of the two terms thus brought into relation incurs the risk of vanishing, and the notion of Person the risk of being lost in the Absolute. A very solid basis of individuation and freedom is demanded for the doctrine of Grace, of which Saint Paul's mind was full when he wrote, "*I live, no longer I who live, but Christ who liveth in me.*" Von Hartmann complains that "*theism starts from the dogmatic à priori that God and man are two conscious personalities of different essence.*" (Rev. phil. Oct. 1883, pp. 414–416.) In fact something should be designated by which our personality might remain inalienable and by which individual Reason could still subsist when it has gone out of Time to unite itself with the pure Intelligible. Our subject does not take us so far.

It is Eloquence which obtains its best and truest effects from mystic symbolism. In giving a psychological definition of eloquence, it must be noticed, first of all, that it is not confined to the effects of logical persuasion; otherwise our interest would be excited more readily by a book than by a discourse. The orator feels a moral emotion from some object which appeals to the Heart, — "his country," "progress," "a fireside to protect," "a soul to save;" and at the very moment in his discourse when his soul seems to us ready to leave everything for this object, his emotion arouses us; it does not kindle ours until he seems to have first alienated his own personal desires for the benefit of some higher Good. Eloquence is really only the fact of this moral transmission of disinterestedness and enthusiasm.[1] Now we must note well the condition of the soul of the orator and of his hearers during that state; we must take by surprise the images which follow each other in the minds *carried away*, and which realize an object far removed from the senses so intensely that they are ready at that moment to pay for it

[1] By way of contrast we might derive from these words of Hume a true definition of Eloquence. "The decline of Eloquence may be attributed," he says, "to our Good Sense. . . . If you banish the pathetic from public discourses you reduce the speakers merely to modern Eloquence, that is, to Good Sense delivered in proper expressions." (*Essais moraux et politiques*, 16e Essai, Œuvres t. vi., pp. 230–231.) As a genuine Englishman, Hume no doubt calls the practical faculty of prudence and skill "Good Sense." It must be acknowledged that this Disinterestedness has only negative relations with the Good Sense which triumphs by "proper expressions" alone, and in this light "modern Eloquence" has nothing in common with Mysticism. It would remain to be seen whether that which was left in a speech deprived of all pathos, would be Eloquence, and whether we ought to retain that word for the practical Evidence which would apply to business matters, or reserve it for a higher Evidence which we never receive without having "transports" aroused in Freedom.

with their blood. These representations, possibly unconscious, are symbols, all the more mystic because they rouse a greater extent of consciousness and carry away more strongly on their side the Reason against the senses. But shall we ever have graphic processes which are sufficiently introspective to grasp and preserve these marvellous visions which the Heart understands how to create in the interest of the objects to be brought before the Reason and into the will of others?

## § II. — THE MYSTIC CITY

I. The social function of Disinterestedness: Peace.
II. Power and Kindness: the Heart the unity of the two concepts.
III. Freedom can have no other mystic object than itself. Mystic and social Ideal: "the Free-Man."
IV. The Mystic City and the World. The man who is free can never be damned.
V. The integration of Souls in the Absolute.
VI. The mystic confidence of Hope.

The social function of Disinterestedness: Peace.

I. The mystic Consciousness loves nothing so much as Peace; its supreme vision is a perfectly organic Society living in Order and Love."[1]

No one can deny that Disinterestedness makes for Peace; it is hardly necessary to connect the two ideas by a middle term. But what is less easy, is to conceive a Society founded

Cœlestis Urbs Jerusalem;
Beata Pacis visio,
Quæ celsa de viventibus
Saxis ad astra tolleris;
Sponsæque ritu cingeris
Mille Angelorum millibus.

(*Breviarium Roman.* Hymn. ad. Vesp. in Festo Dedicationis Ecclesiarum.)

on Disinterestedness. Life triumphs through conflict, and becomes dull and sluggish when the struggle is relaxed. The epigenesis cannot be accomplished and the living thing issue forth unless certain cells prevail in the organic mass and form into centres of energy around which all the other cells group like some blind and passive multitude. Neither could Society endure unless the unities strove with each other, and unless some of them became "leaders" dominating the others.

Any conception of the Absolute tending to do away with or even to retard this emulation, which is vital, would be anti-scientific. Must the idea of the Good, then, be brought within the limits of Life, and must Disinterestedness be confined within the restrictions of rights prescribed by Reason? By so doing we renounce at the same time both the Absolute and Disinterestedness. In Time there is no room for anything but *deeds;* and the Absolute finds no place therein. And with regard to disinterestedness, if we choose to see in it only the facts of moral alienation prescribed by law, it would no longer belong to the Heart, but to the Sword; that is, it would be no use to speak about it any more.

What part is it proper to assign to disinterestedness in a society which is formed first and foremost upon Law? In our opinion it should be recognized as having all the marks of a *social postulate;* it is a fact which sociology demands as sternly as it is helpless to pronounce its conditions. It could not be conceived that a society would condemn itself "to live" empirically under the organic and

protective action of laws, deprived of any ideal order of interest and action such as belong to the very nature of man. Our need of Freedom is a consequence of our need of Life, and for this reason, doubtless, we find no example in history of any society which has completely withdrawn itself from the Ideal. Even in the present day, when the World seems better armed for life, we agree to define Civilization as a pacific state in which all efforts are directed towards the extension, that is to say, towards the idealization of life universally. Thus there recurs in all liberal and sound political projects the "Vision of Peace" of the Mystics.

II. We shall go on to understand better and better that the concept of Force is not opposed to that of Kindness. In the same way that we learn to believe, when we look deep into things, that they all share in a common source of activity, and that the Soul of the world — Desire — can only triumph over the division of matter by persistently following some unique and supreme end, we are also forced to think that Desire increases in the same way when there appears in our Freedom that ultimate transcendence which we call the "Heart" or "Kindness." In order that the Will should detach itself morally from the ego, it is necessary that the Good, in its active form of Force should be reflected in the world once again, and should perform an act of independence, all the more remarkable in that it constitutes a state of consciousness. When the soul has reached that point, laws cease to have any existence so far as it is concerned. It enters

Power and Kindness: the Heart the unity of the two concepts.

under the direct dominion, or rather into direct communion, with the Good, which is its own law. In this empirical world, however, into which man is born, it must be acknowledged that the Good rarely triumphs to such a degree, and when it does it is as it were by surprise. No such supreme effort is necessary for Life; it employs its power of willing for useful purposes, that is to say, egotistically; it does not create things that are "good," and even ignores them. Hence it arises that to the general habit and opinion Goodness is an exotic. But does this matter? The ultra positive conception of Life, supported even by force of the instincts, ought not to prevail over laws of Freedom and moral Progress which are inscribed in the very foundation of the mind. It is for Society to arm itself morally, and see to it that none prevail over others except for the Good of all, and that public affairs fall only into the hands of the *best*, in the sense of the "disinterested." Power in man should have its seat in the Heart. Mere mastery engenders Tyrants.

III. But we have learned also that disinterestedness does not find support in universal symbols such as the principles of Duty; and that, on the contrary, its symbols are formed from all that is most personal to us and most free. To dream of a "mystic City," would be, therefore, to circumscribe ourselves within contradictory aspirations of a sort which could never pass into fact except by violating the idea of "Freedom," which must sustain all the others in this matter. No social part can be assigned to mystic Symbolism. In default, however, of common symbols, a universal, and in some sort religious

Freedom can have no other mystic object than itself. Mystic and social Ideal: "the Free-Man."

object must be presented to souls capable of social aspirations; this object is Freedom itself, which renders us susceptible to Mysticism and guarantees its purity. We have already learned that in the inmost of ourselves, exclusively, do we perceive the Infinite, and that the true Heaven is there, in those inherent powers for Good, which nothing empirical limits. And, moreover, it is a practical object, beyond which there could be only an irrational Absolute pursued by the imagination of false mystics, throughout every corner of space and dream. It is in the heart that God lives, manifests himself, calls for love, and gives it to us. He does not exist for us anywhere else; but there, he is as accessible as he is infinite, and claims our generosity as much as he imposes himself on our adoration. Man is not so much a "free" being as he is a being who is "freeing" himself slowly, through Science, Labor, Kindness, Reason, from the many things which still oppress his soul and burden his life. There is, then, such a thing as an ideal man, who must be developed at the expense of everything else. We have seen that it is one and the same thing to be "Holy" and to be "Free;" and the mystics are right when they say that there is no other evil than "sin." And what is sin except everything which entails a loss of Freedom? What other way is there of offending the Absolute? Disinterestedness thus finds firm footing and full scope to exercise itself without end. Every kind of Mysticism must yield itself into the hands of that God who is before all things, and who yet asks to manifest himself in man.

IV. When Saint Augustine, together with all Christian mystics, and according to the gospel, makes a moral division of man into two incompatible Cities, "the City of God, and the World,"[1] we cannot but perceive in it one of those profoundly discerned moral truths which, however, become absurdities if pushed to their logical extreme. Since Society is but the organic assemblage of all men for the maintenance of Life, how could there be an Antinomy at the root of this fact? The rational and Christian concept of Freedom will come more and more to replace the mystical Dualism of the Manichæans. Human life is not embarked either in the Good or the Bad, but in that indeterminateness which we call "Freedom," in which moral movement alone is possible. The will, doubtless, never ceases to advance, either in the sense of duty or the opposite; but so long as habit and heredity produce *organic* effects, no men are absolutely good, or absolutely bad. There can be no place assigned in the evolution of character at which a man loses that which makes him "man," namely, Freedom. Whenever a rational representation or act of judgment can take place in us, Freedom is there present and one with it. A whole moral order may arise in one instant of free Reason; it is, indeed, the whole order of Grace which becomes a renewed possibility. Logically, therefore, in this life there are only the "wretched," and absolutely to doom those who are con-

The Mystic City and the World. The man who is free can never be damned.

[1] "Fecerunt itaque civitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet, amor suî usque ad contemptum Dei, cœlestem vero, amor Dei usque ad contemptum suî." (*De Civitate Dei*, l. xiv. c. xxviii.)

demned by law or opinion might be, perhaps, the height of immorality. There is always enough of personality and of that human essence which Kant calls "Dignity," about the very worst of men for us to be careful how we venture to refuse them our respect. In the Mysticism of the gospel there is no better established principle, no deeper sentiment than this. We cannot but believe that it is this quality of respecting love, and of perfect equality in regard to what the gospel religiously calls *a soul*, this mystical indulgence for sin on the part of the holy Being, which has kept Christianity an ever triumphant actuality throughout the centuries.

V. The empirical life is a power of selection, and as such it triumphs in the individual and in the species; it assimilates the best of things. Must we acknowledge that this effort of Being contradicts itself in its highest manifestation, or else that morality is a manifestation of Being inferior to Life? Freedom either has nothing sure and solid in it at all, or else it tends, like life, to the triumph and survival of the fittest. Those Beings who reach that full development of Freedom, which is Goodness, cannot be eliminated from existence; they are already predestined to form part of the Absolute. The integration of good-wills in the Absolute is precisely the mystic City of which Saint Augustine spoke, and which it is well not to ignore here below in the social hurly-burly, as it is also well to desire individually with all our strength its fulfilment out of Time. If the Absolute exists how could this City not exist? How could it be otherwise, since by definition it is the Alpha and

The integration of Souls in the Absolute.

the Omega of things, and since desire, which is the principle of existence, can only expire in possession, since the act can only finish in the Good? Is nothing to remain of all the manifold ways in which Being is unfolded in the world in order to embosom itself in the consciousness? If anything is to remain, it cannot exist in a state of dispersion; it will return within and to a centre, in a stable unity whence issues Power, and whither tends Desire. The things which adapt themselves to the Good with sufficient tenacity to enable them to survive, namely, good-wills, place themselves, even in this life, in the perfect and final Order which is Love, than which there is no higher way of bringing back multiplicity into unity.

From the affective point of view no other conclusion could be reached. If it is true that Goodness, in the general experience of life, is an exoticism, persons mystic enough to embrace it practically will be enough so to admit that in some manner it triumphs in the Absolute. This does not mean that we are good in this life, only in order to be happy in the Absolute; for that would be destructive of the very essence of Goodness. Only, when mystics assert that, in spite of appearances, there is some moral integration of things in the Absolute, they in their turn are defending themselves against the obsession of nothingness. With nothing to hope from sensible Happiness, owing to the standard of life they have chosen, as difficult of attainment as it is morally elevated, they soothe the repinings of the senses and even the rebellions of the heart, by promises of the ultimate triumph of Justice and Kindness. The mystic City, in the vision of

Hope, is built up on such perfect laws of justice and compensation that each loss of sensible happiness here below reappears in it as an embellishment or sumptuous detail of celestial architecture.[1]

Why should we go on speaking about "selection" and "exoticism" with regard to these moral things? Why not say that hope is universal, and that so is Goodness, and that the Mystic City is without walls? At least such is the state of supreme desire. Whatever the facts may be, it must be maintained that every man bears within himself the conditions of that Mysticism which accompanies Freedom as light follows the sun. We are predestined by Reason members of the kingdom of Ends, all of us; not only those who receive a mystic baptism in the unfathomable regions of the soul, but those who bear about in the flesh that capacity of emotion and kindness which makes us creators, of like nature with the Absolute.

The moral significance of our actions is also to be considered. Since no such significance exists in Nature, which is altogether in phenomena, it has to be conceded to her to express it otherwise, by a word which is not explicatory, and which only serves to identify us with the Absolute beyond time. The free being does not fulfil in Time the acts which

[1] Scalpri salubris ictibus
Et tunsione plurimâ
Fabri polita malleo,
Hanc saxa molem construunt;
Aptisque juncta nexibus
Locantur in fastigio.

(*Brev. Rom.* Hymn. ad. Vesp.
In Festo Dedicationis Ecclesiarum.)

are proper to it; that which appears of them on the outside is but an *empirical translation* of this transcendent activity; but itself does not go forth from the intelligible world. In this way our moral life escapes the nothingness in which all our actions perish empirically. Kant thus expresses himself with regard to the free being; *in him no act would be born and no act would perish*.[1] Now mystics believe, in the first place, with Kant, that the acts which "do not perish" become integrated in a personal whole which they name indifferently "soul" or "character;" but after this they proceed so far as to think that the souls come in their turn into union with the Absolute.

VI. Lastly, let us remark that mysticism rests upon no faltering hope of the future life, as upon a postulate; and herein is its advantage over pure Reason. Mystic Reason apprehends the Absolute, *after having made of it an interior object* by means proper to itself, in a vivid intuition, analogous to that of the senses in apprehending phenomena. Thus, back of the symbols where the mystic feels God, he also feels his soul identified in union with God; and thence he obtains knowledge of his immortality, without recourse to any other considerations. It is not solely to fill up practically the immense hiatus which separates our Heart from the Absolute or to construct logically the idea of sovereign Good which causes the mystic consciousness to maintain such confident Hope. From its own intimate experience it believes itself to be an integral part of the Absolute, and it desires future life, as the bud de-

The mystic confidence of Hope.

[1] *Crit. R. pure*, t. ii. p. 140.

sires to unclose and the embryo to be born.[1] What will become of the personality of souls in this mystery which Reason cannot fathom? The mystic asks for no complicated explanations; he trusts God, he trusts an unfailing Love more than he trusts reasonings. After having alienated the ego, with purity of intention, he has no further thought of resuming it again with all the persistent desires of the "will-to-live." Moreover, no one can lose himself in the Good without the actual consciousness of finding himself again, more alive and more complete. An act so vital as this carries with it no impression of death and extinction. Even here below the soul feels that it is divine; that, though conditions change, its essence does not change; it will partake of the interests of the Absolute, as distinctly as it once partook of its Reason, — free at last to participate therein directly and without symbols.

The mystic Activity is thus completed. At the point where all sensible experience ends, we have seen that Reason hesitates; it can only hazard an assumption in regard to the future life, similar to that in regard to the existence of God; a *postulate* only. How in fact could we proceed to construct such a concept, and what could be put into it but our dreams? Thus Faith, the mystic intuition, claims this as its own proper function, and it has been defined "the power

[1] For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestations of the Sons of God: here below all is subject to vanity . . . but there all shall be delivered from that bondage. Meanwhile creation groaneth and travaileth . . . and ourselves also, which have already in us a beginning of God, we groan within ourselves, waiting for the final adoption. — PAUL, *Ep. to the Romans*, viii. 19–23.

to give substance to things which are still only in the state of desires."[1] Mystic Hope, in order to give a body to that which has even less than the objects of the moral consciousness, asks support for the last time from symbols; but in our opinion, every great soul, whatever his intellectual bent, whoever in this world has the power of Kindness, will find within himself enough mysticism to give consistency to his dreams of Heaven. In him the Absolute will posit itself to the very end under consonant symbols while waiting for the intuitions which are to succeed to Hope.

[1] "The substance of things hoped for." (Hebrews xi. 1.)

# CONCLUSION

If modern thought has cast off the fetters of religious dogma only to make another prison-house of the empirical consciousness, and if every mental combination which does not reflect the necessity of causal succession has to be relinquished, the second bondage will be no better than the one just ended.

Science, we recognize the fact, is sovereign in the experimental order of things; and by "Science" we understand, broadly, all that Kant placed in pure Reason: the principles of the understanding with those of the sensibility. We do not deny, in the name of a higher interest, or attachment to ideas believed indestructible, any portion of the "knowable" to this broad field of the activity of the consciousness. Everything which is "Object" belongs to it. But on another side, the "Subject" completely eludes Science, and we use the word with such sufficient strictness that no one can deny it to us in our turn. We still regard as *exterior*, facts of direct representation, or the objective appearance called "phenomena," and we willingly admit, if desired, that the intelligence which confines itself to their interpretation is itself outside of that pure identity which must be called "me," for it is only an intuition of relations inevitably consecutive to the images that are impressed on us empirically. The Subject, in our opinion, commences beyond these facts of consciousness, which are not at the same time

facts of pure autonomy; and we set over against the terms "*that which is done without us, and which exists outside of us,*" which define empiric being, this simple notion of subjective being, "*that which is done by us and which remains within us.*" It is this occult background of subjectivity which, by mingling itself indiscriminately with the images and affirmations of Experience, has been the source of the many errors which have cast, as it were, the shadow of barbarism over times which are under a ban of discredit as "mystical."

It is not at all that the subject subsists apart from things, and intervenes like a spectator in the midst of the universal mechanism, ready to go in or out of it at pleasure. We are born into, and developed wholly in Experience; were we to try to go out from it, the result would be the loss of our most original intuitions, and of that Freedom which will not permit itself to be enclosed in exact formula, like the series of empirical facts. Outside these conditions the subject could not exist, but since it does exist, why wish it to deny itself by consenting to be brought under the principles of Motion and Life solely? Although we are subject to things, not only in order to live, but also in order to think, we have at the same time reason to believe that we are subject to them only as conditions, and that all the facts which can be assembled under the term "empirical consciousness" bear the same relation to the subject that the chemical conditions of matter bear to life. Activity itself, at every degree, escapes exact knowledge — science — but it would be of paramount interest to learn to understand that

ultimate phase of Activity whence proceed the development of character and our whole moral history; we would gladly give a large part of science in exchange for an adequate and clear knowledge of our Freedom.

The empirical school counsels us to seek repose in courageous intellectual abnegation, and candidly to consign the unknowable to the same rank as non-being. But this is putting too high a price on peace of mind. Not only would religions, not only would Metaphysics cease to be, if we were to refuse to go further than positive and scientific experience, but the noblest activities of the consciousness would come to an end. There is a natural Faith which gives life alike to Art and Morals, and which must never be sacrificed. Man needs must adorn his life, or even cheer it, with these sublime illusions, whose principles are within himself only. Above all things, lest his Freedom degenerate into an overwhelming burden, he feels it a real requirement to be *morally inspired,* and to invest the contingency of his actions with some assured importance, so that he cannot consent to repudiate that Faith which creates within the subject an unreal world, the contemplation of which is life-giving.

The mind has but one means of conferring upon its esthetic and religious creations sufficient truth to make them enduring, and this is, not to endeavor to place them outside of itself. The objectivity which mystics have too often attributed to their apparitions has been only illusory, and contrary to the interests of Mysticism. Man's understanding is not formed for the construction of the immutable

being that our faith adores, or for the unattainable beauty which our fancy covets. It is only formed to apprehend, under fixed schemata, that which our senses present to us in the constant mobility of the becoming. Certainly, all that we hold through the insights of faith and fancy may be called objects, in the sense of *positive existence* and *truth*, but let it be candidly recognized that we must neither appeal to authority of experience in their behalf, nor to any of the principles which allow us to posit certain affirmations in common. Freedom alone authorizes us to objectivate intuitions of this kind; but is it not a flagrant contradiction "to assume to extend knowledge from Freedom"? Would it not be better to call such intuitions, which are for each person alone, by their true name, "beliefs"?

All things are not in Experience, but whatever more there may be, only one single notion of common usage among minds made like ours remains to be spoken of, namely, the notion of *existence*. Let us not bring the word "Inspiration" into this connection, — a very excellent word in its place, but having naught to do with Knowledge properly so called. Inspiration does not enter into the understanding; it illuminates a deeper, and there is no doubt, a more admirable part of the ego. Under its inspiring influence, to whatever principles it may belong, the wonderful mirrors of the imagination are diverted from the speculative understanding towards more active powers, which would remain in unconsciousness were it not for the aid of empirical representations: but as soon as the imaginative species reach us, our Freedom employs them as symbols, and we begin

to perceive a whole order of things which only needed light in order to appear. The Infinite, the first promises of which at least we bear within us, comes forth from the unconscious, and is manifested in forms which enchant us and in facts from which we get life, as much as we do from those called "empirical."

Rational criticism of the Idea of God has in our days departed too far from this intimate personal experience which we call "mystical," and has too much neglected, either out of respect or lack of appreciation, to collect the esoteric information from actual religions which could alone illumine the subject with its true light. We need only remember at each moment, if we would enter this domain fitly, that God has the power to give himself, because he is God, but that he is not "to be taken" hold of, as we take hold of things when we desire to know them. Done in this spirit what nobler work could there be? And what can be more communicable than these "short paths," if such there be, between the Supreme Being and our Freedom?

To deny empirical subjectivity to the creations of Faith is not in any way to diminish their truth or their worth. There are two ways of being "object," if the word is to be identical with "true;" that which will not detach itself from us externally may detach itself from us in such a manner as to permit it to be called "*excessivity*." The "exterior" object has preceded our sensations and even our consciousness; it remains after us as a permanent possibility of the same sensations. The "interior" object, it is true, reaches our consciousness only under forms as variable

as those of the Character for which it is specially created; but can we say that there is not also an indwelling permanent possibility under the symbolic appearances? — even more, an active power for inspiration ever renewed in the same direction? Nevertheless, we do not make the special objectivity of the symbols to consist in this power to reproduce the same facts (or similar facts) in all free subjects; it lies specially in their signification. That which symbolic representations affirm is a character "in excess" of all our natural tendencies, and of notions acquired empirically; they are *postulates* which seem to us evidently never-ending; and the evolution of the mystic fact is only additional evidence of this beyond all the other affirmations of the consciousness. This character of "excessivity," which belongs not only to the precepts of Duty, but to certain of our attributes, such as Personality and Freedom, and even to sundry judgments constituting Taste, has no resemblance to the speculative universality of the principles of the understanding. They are postulates which do not proclaim themselves necessary unless they are *practical;* we face here, therefore, a positive and not a speculative necessity, which for us is a true apparition of the Infinite. Are we wrong in saying that the facts by which we gain consciousness of these objects and of their excessive nature constitute an inward experience of quite as great importance as Experience properly so called?

There is no fear, then, that the divine substance, declared absent from the empirical world, should return to Freedom only to be lost there. The objectivity of this world is but

contingent and ephemeral in comparison with the super-empirical truths which exist in the characteristics of Duty, in the legitimately non-satiable desires of Reason, in the effects which render our hearts subjugate to Beauty. Our only care must be to take these interior objects from the source where they really subsist, and to put behind us with courage the empirical elements of the symbols which do not show us the face of God, but merely acquaint us that he is present in the very least aspirations of our Freedom. It has been believed that the idea of God would be lost, should man come to perceive that it contains only that which he has brought to it of his own. To our mind it is quite the contrary, and the idea can only be preserved by first deserting the fields of mystery where it has too long tarried in company with the dreams of Occultism, under condition of returning to the region of mystery again when we shall have attained the consciousness of all that is in it of positive and human. A man cannot be filled with God except so far as he recognizes, by a full and generous use of his own facts of consciousness, the Infinite which declares itself in Freedom. Should God, then, be only our own Heart raised to the *nth* power, and should we attach ourselves to him in no other way, he could not be angry with us that we did not adore him beyond what we know of him. Such a religion, besides, seems to us to be both exhaustless and founded positively upon the very attributes by which we live.

In very truth, when we reduce to their last term the discoveries of Inspiration derived from the subjectivity of

Prophets and Seers, many lovely and revered recitals change their aspect, and only a moral matter is left which Freedom alone can turn to profit. But it is enough. For minds narrowly wedded to the letter of the mystical books, a whole world, half empirical, half celestial, crumbles into dust under the new religious Criticism, a world of ethereal space, hardly more concrete than the light, its hosts of visionary beauty, and its events floating outside of Time, freed from all causality and the laws of the possible. But let us be honest. If modern thought forces the supernatural into those regions of the consciousness where alone it can dwell securely, what will faith lose thereby? Have we lost a single idea worth retaining since the scholastic entities were banished from discussion? The mystic Heaven may indeed lose some of the empirical creations with which the naïveté of preceding ages had filled it, but the Heart loses nothing of its depths and its power of moral creation; this Heaven remains ours, untouched, true and desirable above all the objects which bewilder science or tempt the senses.

Pure Mysticism does not refuse to continue in this subjectivity; it even accepts the position that the Ideal, having issued from man, tends only towards human efforts of conservation and of moral progress. What other End could oppose itself to that? Obstinately to persist in something which could be neither verified empirically nor justified morally, would be to descend from mystic heights to an ordinary fanaticism; it would no longer be a defence of religion, but the tenacious clinging to a passion. But, on the other hand, there is nothing firmer and more secure than

that "Excess" of being, of love, and of happiness, mystically present in the consciousness when it looks into its own depths and appeals in its helplessness to moral Inspiration and the aid of symbols. Nothing forbids us to affirm the existence of that which we thus experience, although possibly we cannot bring it under the conditions of experience, nor under the laws of life and motion; for being is not any less positive when it is good, and desirable, than when real and possessed. Possession is but the fulfilment of Desire; possession, therefore, is necessary in the degree that Desire is legitimate. But to maintain securely this serene position, mystic Positivism must check every attempt to complete the knowledge of God by the ordinary means of the understanding and the senses; it must appeal wholly to other means, good-faith, love, loyalty, means which permit the assimilaton of the Infinite, far better than the world can be assimilated by knowing.

The moral conditions of society which make Faith humanly possible must also be regarded. Desire, which keeps the world alive, can never find repose in anything but the Absolute, when once it takes possession of itself in Freedom. The images which occupy the incessant activity of the consciousness must not be torn away from it; if the term of the empirical life is made to appear to it with such fixed limits that to imagine anything further would be folly, it will desire to confine itself within that precise circle of interests and actions; but in that case, the Absolute, immanent in Freedom will only change its sphere. The will for immediate possession, and in the end a homicidal absolutism of

the passions will succeed to the purity and everlastingness of the mystic desires. Should every one lose that purifying faith which enables us to turn our unbounded desires towards some object as vast as our Freedom, there would be no more counting upon the coalition of the strongest to preserve the relativity of the functions indispensable to the social body. In the absence of the bond of Kindness, so well named *Humanitas*, there is no regulating power in Nature which can apply to our collective humanity. All Desire would thenceforth tend to dispersion and would only triumph by sheer intensity. Faith, as a power of disinterestedness, is to the social life what empirical desire is to all the rest of nature.

Were there no reaction against Mysticism except the purpose of diverting us from the pursuit of ends exterior to humanity, there would be nothing to fear. The mystic object, if not wholly within man, offers at least nothing practical outside, and there is something to give fulfilment to the "excess" of human desire in the Ideal of universal solidarity and Freedom. But in order that man's good should thus remain a function of the pure Good, and in order that disinterestedness should be possible, we must leave every consciousness to form for itself this conviction, which is "excessive" to Science, namely: "*that a man, in himself alone, is worth the whole order of empirical things.*" In the words of Saint Francis de Sales, it suffices that such a principle "dwell in the pinnacle and summit of the mind" for the mystic fact to be produced, with all the conditions of imagination and will which accompany it. If, then, man has only to clear

away ancient conceptions in order to gain consciousness of his Freedom with all this power of meaning, we may trust ourselves to modern ideas. The active and exacting human ego that we are would have only to preserve itself on one side, from the grasp of empirical Determinism, and on the other, from the reasons ingeniously brought together by the partisans of the freedom of indifference; it would no longer be conscious of any but a wholly positive Freedom, appropriate to its needs. Nothing then would hinder its course towards a God common to all peoples, the infinity of our own goodness and of our own happiness. Let men help us to think really and assuredly that each one of us, instead of being lost in space and morally imponderable, is the issue of first principles, as Person, very much more than things of mere contingence; that the Absolute is but the matrix whence the mind has taken its forms and its free energy, and that it is, in short, nothing but our formal identity with God which prevents us from determining him to ourselves scientifically, as we do all the rest; thus will be saved the essence of Religion of which all special symbols are but the free development. We shall realize, with this capital integrally preserved, all the fruits of loving-kindness, of morality, of contentment, and even of holiness, which have seemed to keep close to the mystic consciousness as on their own native soil.

In spite of Fate which we blame for all ills, treasures of goodness and happiness are stored up in every human soul; the elements are always there ready to produce sane insights which have the power to beautify life and ennoble character. But the insights remain unrealized, or if undertaken in criti-

cal moments they miscarry, because the imagination by its unaided self can furnish only their matter. To the imagination must be joined Faith with its assurance and its creative power, faith which can alone associate the images in such a manner in our minds that flashes of freedom and impressions of happiness spring therefrom, in the same way that Life with her all-powerful art, builds up active unities from the elements which in matter only clash with each other.

Man has gone too far afield from himself. Since we have found out that even the study of Nature enables us to penetrate certain secrets of the ego, and that our mental associations gain in usefulness by conforming strictly to objective relations, we have come to esteem too lightly, under the term *à priori*, a series of facts of consciousness which express to us more directly the laws of happiness and of duty. Doubtless man, absorbed in the events proper to him, has in former times deprived himself of positive information which might have added to his Freedom; but it is sufficient proof that all was not pure dream in these visions of faith, that man has been able to return from them into practical life, more sober, more active, more strong to keep his word and his resolves. He would have been much more so, let us grant, if the mystic consciousness, throughout the centuries which knew Freedom too little, had not often burdened itself with preoccupations which concerned neither science nor faith.

Faith embraces all the first principles which Science renounces as unknowable while it devotes itself to the "pursuit of facts" and their laws. Man has not yet succeeded in

obtaining consciousness of himself in those inmost depths of the "subject" where direct representations cease, since there still remains unexplored that source of activity and of subjective laws which cannot be treated as moral fictions. Nothing, then, is left to man but to summon the Invisible by solicitations of Desire, and to procure for himself the Invisible by a series of expressions destined to become extinct as soon as we learn symbolically what we are capable of and what we are. Under these conditions of nature the inspirations of faith are found indispensable. They must never cease. The essence of man, Reason, Person, or Freedom, however you choose to call it, is a true "Absolute in time," that is to say an Implicit forever unfolding itself. In order for the aspirations of Freedom to be fulfilled, and for the Desires of Reason to find perpetual repose, life, freed ideally and physically from all that oppresses it, must become for all men, without exception, so bountiful that not a tear nor a sin shall remain on the earth.

Moreover, we have nothing to fear from the changes which may arise in the scientific conception of things. In spite of them, God will still continue to appear to us morally, and the vision of faith will continue to be renewed in every thinking (we might almost say *suffering*) soul. What we have to do is not to abandon ourselves, but to remain loyal to the intrinsic truth of our own nature by pressing forward with our whole strength to desire the things which are greater than the empirical ego, and which do not die with it. Even a man's country, Liberty, and other objects equally vast, will not be absolutely needed to give form

to our visions and food for moral inspiration. Are not all the joys and all the sorrows which are born anew with every man who comes into the world so many objects to be mystically presented to the consciousness, which the heart is impelled to represent to itself, not dialectically (such an interpretation would not be adequate for the objects), but in an inner vision of loving-kindness? However humble the place of the greatest number in the social body, each person is invested with functions which appeal at times to the non-egotistical view of life. And which of us is not often placed by circumstances at some point of view where he discovers the eternity of the good things which our reasonable nature bears about with it? It is enough to have some child to care for and make a *man* of, some misfortune to relieve, some conflict between our moral dignity and our senses, to give us the opportunity to "inspire ourselves" morally. There is nothing in fact but Faith which can place such objects truly in the field of our mental vision, and cause to rise from the Heart into the Imagination those marvellous symbols which hallucinate us and lead us gently to the altar of sacrifice.

What reasons can Truth and Science have to forbid us to seek any longer for intuitions beyond experience through paths of imagination and desire? We know very well that they are not objective, these representations in which our weakness endeavors to apprehend the Absolute; nevertheless faith must subsist, since nothing is *in itself* so much, and nothing exists in higher degree than this "ought-to-be" which conceals itself from the understanding, but which appears before Reason as the antecedent of being. If

our interior symbols are defective as representations, we know assuredly that it is not because they are too beautiful or too touching, for, on the contrary, they are far less so than their object. When Saint Paul, following in the steps of Isaiah, said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what God has prepared for those who love him,"[1] he was beginning to pass beyond the region of symbols and to enter upon those deeps of the spirit where love refuses to express itself in images and appeals to other means of vision. But every man has enough on which to base the humblest aspirations of his heart in the evidence which accompanies Kindness and the testimony that Freedom renders to itself as the highest function of consciousness. No one ever doubts that he will always be right to procure for himself insights which will make him a better man.

It has been said, in more senses than one, that "there are the laws of Truth." Although in the Absolute, Truth can only form one with the Good, and as we may consider them together "one and the same reflection of Being," the first of these concepts will always be wanting in that indispensable quality of universality which would enable us practically to make all the rest depend upon it. Without doubt there will always be certain minds that will aspire to truth through science, and others that will seek for it in more vivid and intimate ways by means of symbols. We can hardly indulge the hope that some day evidence of common notions will extend to all parts of Knowledge, or that we shall finally be all identified in some

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 9.

centre of intellectual unity. Some very different influence will bring consciences together, and neither science nor symbols must put themselves in the way of such supremely desirable results. Gradually, as man advances in Freedom, a clarity is produced in himself which is purer than evidence, and there comes a peace between fellow-men surer than any to be obtained by the intellectual fusion of souls. It matters little where each one goes to obtain Loving-kindness, that attribute which alone should be called "divine." It is enough that it exists. To define its precise conditions would perhaps be unwise, and no one would wish to compress it into formulæ less broad than human consciousness itself. We have called it "divine," yet it is also pre-eminently the "human fact," — *humanitas*. Were we required to describe it by its essential works, distinct from all other facts, we could find nothing better than this positive term : "*Kindness is the fulfilment of Freedom.*"

But if Freedom leads to Loving-kindness, that is to say, to a moral alienation, let us not forget that it begins and subsists only by acts of intellectual autonomy. Mysticism is no other thing than "absolute spontaneity of the mind."[1] When Mysticism is reproached for the individual character of its acquisitions, we forget that such subjectivity is a term as positive as "absolute spontaneity," and that knowledge properly so called, owes, after all, its character of universality to "objective" laws which are *restrictive* to the same degree. The mystic experience has no other laws than those of Desire : therefore its activity is boundless ; and moreover,

[1] Lachelier, *Psychologie et Métaphysique*, Rev. Phil., Mar. 1885.

as Analogy offers to it inexhaustible means of representation, it can go forward in the exploration of the ego, until it has encountered the Absolute, or at least, the spiritual fact, that "last point of support for all truth and all existence;"[1] which takes its place.

Since the Absolute is in us, and since it is this very inwardness which conceals it from us, what can Metaphysics do unless it pushes the freedom of its method as far as acts of mystic spontaneity — even to Inspiration? But if Mysticism were called to replace Metaphysics we should see more and more that its relations with science are only negative. Between these two kinds of mental activity there is as sharp a distinction as between the ego and the non-ego which serves as the basis of consciousness, and precisely for this reason we must not by any means speak of opposition. How could Science, which lives upon clearness and evidence, be hostile to the spiritual autonomy which is the essential fact of Mysticism? We believe, on the contrary, that scientific disinterestedness and mystic naïveté hide the same moral origin under very different features. Heteronomy cannot reach the mind, except by non-ideal influence, that is, by an intrusion of purely external symbols, taking the place of the clear ideas which nourish Freedom.

"Science or Inspiration": we do not fear to hazard the alternative. If human life has spiritual needs which science cannot satisfy, then Desire must count only upon itself; it must act in the direction of its most naïve tendencies, and it must fasten upon the apparitions which arise from the

[1] Lachelier, loc. cit.

Heart, that is, the "Absolute spontaneity" of the Consciousness. The highest intellectual satisfaction, the presence of the Absolute, will never be the result of an ideal synthesis; it exacts a more energetic initiative than curiosity, and it requires intuitions no less naïve than those of the senses. Since it is our condition of "free being" which creates in us the evident excess of Desire over the Intelligence, there must also be in Freedom reserves of the spiritual to re-establish the balance; otherwise we should sin, we alone in the Universe, would be sinful in our very essence. To these priceless reserve forces we have given the name of Inspiration.

The Absolute eludes the Consciousness, but the Good fills it completely. We need only to love it, and the truth of Pascal's sentence is fulfilled: "God known of the Heart."

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